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A GATHERING OF LIKE SOULS: THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY NATIONAL BLACK LESBIAN AND GAY CONFERENCE

EMPOWERMENT: THE CONTENT OF OUR ENTREPRENEURIAL CHARACTER

THE RACE POLITICS OF AIDS IN PHILADELPHIA

NEWS FROM ZIMBABWE: THE OUTING OF A PRESIDENT

THE SOUND OF ANN NESBY'S BLACKNESS

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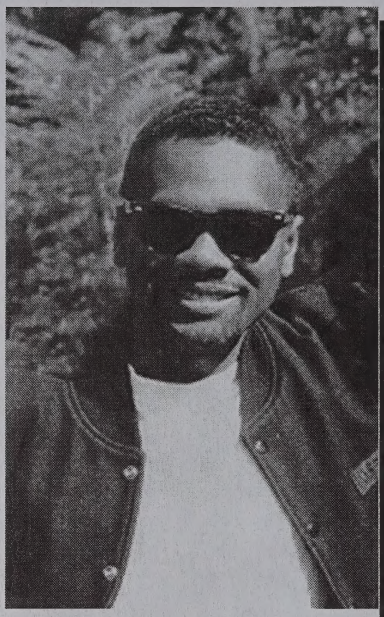

Sometimes bitter lessons are hard to take but take them we must if we are to survive.

The escalating racism in America has been more than aided and abetted by the apathy of African America. A false comfort zone of token gains has dangerously insulated us against reality. There are those among us who truly believe that we have reached a level of equal opportunity in this country and therefore there is no need to equalize the slanted playing field. There are those among us who say that they are sick and tired of drudging up the ugly memories of the past and want to view their world only in terms of the future.

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sbc

SBC

A Monthly For The Africentric Homosexual
Volume SIX ISSUE ONE
JANUARY 1997

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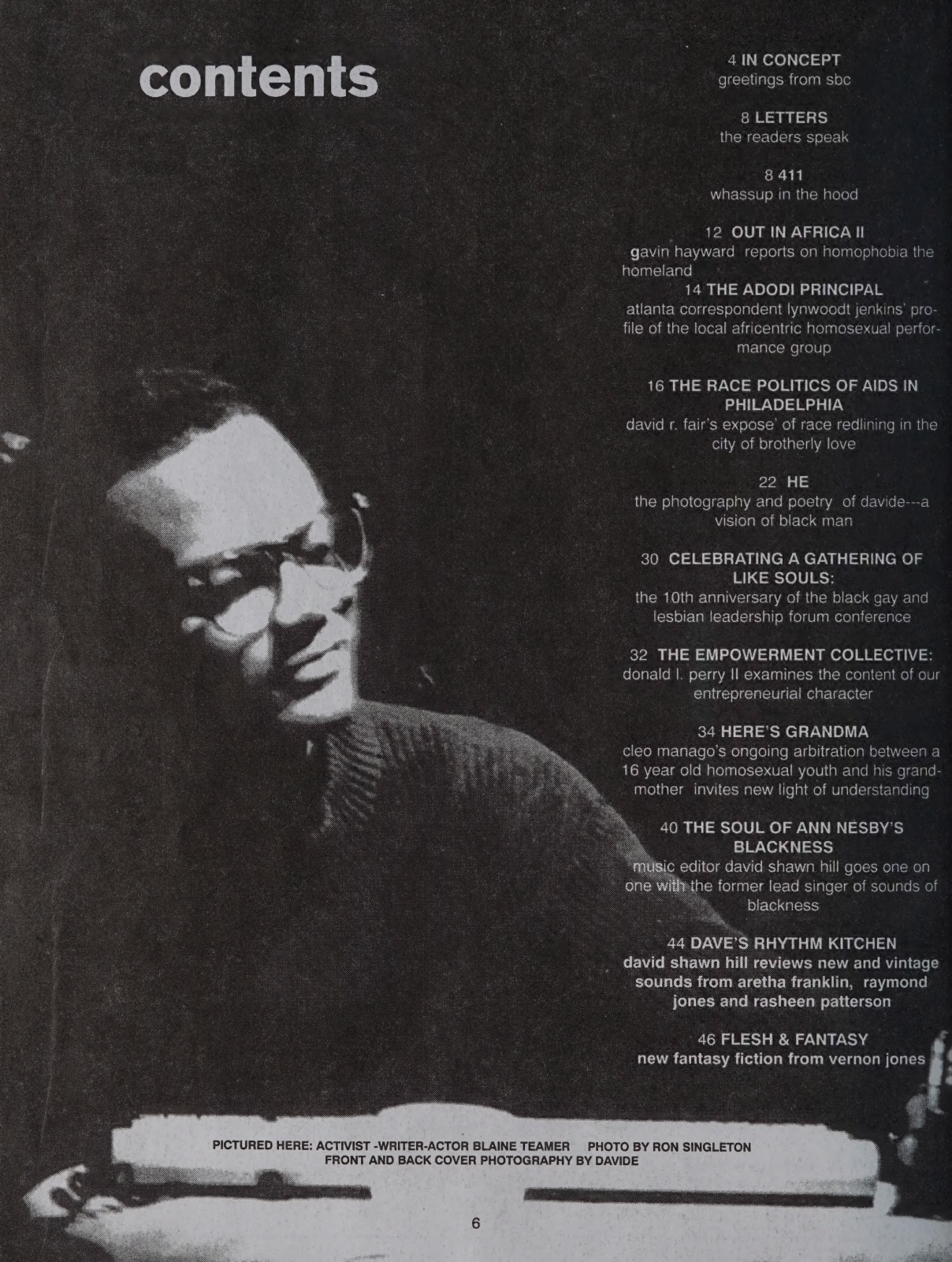

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I got the new mag yesterday. I just wanted to let you guys know that I think you are doing a great job! You should be proud of your accomplishments. SBC is letting the world know that we (the Afrocentric homosexual community) are significant movers and shakers, that we are a community that truly has something of value to offer the world and to ourselves. SBC continue to be a prime example and a vehicle of encouragement to Black Gay publishers and people everywhere. If no one has taken the time out to let you know that, I am doing it now.

Stanley, you and your team are proof that persistence, time and faith pays off. Keep it up! SBC. You helped to make me proud to say, "I am a Black Homosexual."

With Love and Respect,

Stephen Johnson
Publisher
Whazzup! Magazine
Oakland, California

I write because each new issue of SBC continues to be an inspiration!

The November '96 issue was, in a word, "excellent". The format and photos in the "411" section were great. The interview with James Earl Hardy had real intellectual substance and for me "The Marriage of Carlos and Wayne" was as beautiful a piece as I've recently read. You, Stanley, really captured the love these two men have for each other.

Then the December '96 issue arrives with a new color cover format and a real attempt to give voice to the National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum and Black Men's Xchange points of view. In addition, the photographs by Greg McNeal were enough to make every black man even surer of his individual beauty. Wow! I also enjoyed the obvious character and finesse exemplified in Gregory Travis' review of the Jocelyn Elders book Sharecropper's Daughter to Surgeon General.

Stanley, if you ever wonder if it's worth it or if your audience is listening, the answer is yes (twice). Thank you for producing an excellent publication for the wonderful black men and women who love to see and read about ourselves in your magazine.

Kudos

Kenneth E. Reeves
City Councillor
Cambridge, Massachusetts

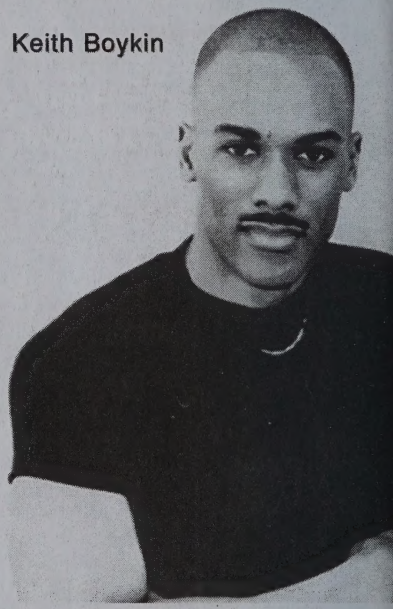
We gladly welcome your comments and letters. When writing, faxing or e-mailing us please include your telephone number which will not be printed, but is needed for verification only. It is not the policy of SBC to print unverifiable, unsigned or anonymous letters. Some letter may be edited for the purpose of space and/or clarity. Mail your letters to The Editor/ SBC magazine/1155 4th Avenue/ Los Angeles, California 90019. Fax us at 213.733.9200 or e-mail us at sbc@netwkcal.com.

The 411

BLACK GAYS AND LESBIANS CHALLENGE CHRISTIAN COALITION TO TAKE REAL STEPS FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Washington DC---On February 4, 1997, the leaders of a national black lesbian and gay organization responded cautiously to elements of a newly announced plan by a right-wing religious group and called on the group to take honest, constructive steps to heal the wounds of division that they have created.

Keith Boykin, Executive Director of the National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum, said the recent announcement of the Christian Coalition's Samaritan Project is only a "first step" in reconciling the religious right's history of indifference toward blacks, the poor and the inner cities. The Samaritan Project includes an 8-point plan for strong families, safe neighborhoods, charitable giving, racial justice, and revitalizing the church.


Keith Boykin

Despite the plan's positive rhetoric, Boykin cautioned that the black community and the gay community still have much reason to be skeptical and quoted the Matthew 7:15-16 warning from Jesus Christ: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits."

Boykin said that the Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum would be closely watching the fruits of the Christian Coalition to see that their deeds match their words. The Forum took up the issue of the religious right in the black community at its Tenth Annual National Conference held in Long Beach, California, February 13-17, 1997. Boykin also announced that the Forum will distribute to churches nationwide copies of a new award-winning documentary film called "All God's Children," which responds to the role of the religious right in the black church.

In a February 4 letter to Christian Coalition director Ralph Read, Boykin encouraged Reed's organization to take four specific steps to achieve social and economic justice.

First, he asked that Ralph Reed meet with members of the black lesbian and gay community to discuss how we can overcome the barriers that have excluded our cooperation.

Second, he called for the Christian Coalition to expand the scope of its "Racial Justice" campaign to include Social Justice for all people, including lesbians and gays. "The Christian Coalition should support the Employment Non Discrimination Act, which outlaws employment discrimination based on sexual orientation," Boykin said.

Third, Boykin and the Forum called for an end to the Christian Coalition's inflammatory anti-gay rhetoric. "If they really want to help communities, they first need to stop the hateful rhetoric that has kept people divided against one other," said Mandy Carter, who since 1994 has led the Leadership Forum's "Call to Resist" campaign.

Fourth, the Forum urged the Christian Coalition to renounce the elements of its Samaritan Plan that will cause further economic injustice, including the call for passage of a balanced budget amendment, which will require decidedly unchristian cuts in services to women, children, and the poor. In addition, the plan would restore the "gag rule" on family doctors and deny access to family planning services for poor women, women in the military, and women living overseas. It would also de-fund the National Endowment for the Arts and the Legal Services Corporation for the poor.

The Samaritan Project bills itself as "a bold and compassionate plan to combat poverty and restore hope." However, "there's nothing bold or compassionate about balancing the budget on the backs of the poor," Boykin said. "What kind of good Samaritan would abandon the role of government in helping the needy?" he asked.

Boykin called on the religious right to embrace new challenges, including preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS, the leading cause of death for African-Americans between the ages of 25 and 44. "I want to see the Christian Coalition fighting for Medicaid funding and health care for the 37 million uninsured Americans," he said. "How are we going to provide jobs and training for people who are kicked off the welfare rolls and onto the streets? These are the questions we need to answer."

The National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum is the only national organization dedicated to the nation's two and a half million African-American gays and lesbians. Established in 1988, the Forum works to empower black lesbians and gays by developing their leadership skills, increasing their visibility, and building bridges between their various communities.

STAMP OUT AIDS! AND FRIENDS OF LEIMERT PARK PLAN TRIBUTE TO STRICKEN "GOOD TIMES" STAR RALPH CARTER

Los Angeles, Ca--- Stamp Out AIDS!, the community-based, non-profit organization of 10,000 postal workers and Friends of Leimert Park Fine Art Gallery, are putting together a special tribute to "Good Times" star Ralph Carter who has been stricken with the AIDS virus. The actor, known to millions of Americans as "Michael" from the long-running 70's sitcom, became a household name and symbol of intelligence and black consciousness for young people and adults alike.

The Ralph Carter Tribute, which is hosted by Gill's Barrel Catering and features a video get well card recording, is part of a day long program to be held Sunday, March 16, 1997 between 12 noon and 6 pm at the Leimert Park Fine Art Gallery, 3351 West 43rd Street, Los Angeles, California. The Leimert Park Fine Art Gallery is located in the largest concentrated area of black owned businesses in the United States.

March being Women's Month, a special women's art exhibit and book signing will be held from 3 pm to 6 pm in honor of women overcome by the AIDS virus.

The entire day's event is free to the public.

For further information please contact the Friends of Leimert Part Fine Art Gallery Volunteer Project Coordinator, Elwin Ruthledge at 213.299.0319.

UFMCC AND PLANTETOUT ANNOUNCE JOINT PLANS IN CYBERSPACE

Los Angeles, CA---The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC), the world's largest Lesbian/Gay Christian denomination, and PlanetOut (PNO). an " online virtual community" on America On Line (AOL) and the world-wide web, have reach an agreement on plans for joint efforts in cyberspace.

The agreement was finalized at the UFMCC Technology Summit held in the newly purchased $3.8 million UFMCC World Center Building in West Hollywood, CA. The Technology Summit (the first for the fast-growing denomination), was convened by the Reverend Elder Troy Perry, UFMCC's founder and moderator, and included members from throughout the Fellowship with expertise in a wide variety of communication and information technologies.

Tom Rielly, President and CEO of PLANETOUT, was the featured speaker at the event.

According to Perry, "UFMCC, with 300 congregations in 19 countries, has already established itself as a major lesbian.gay presence in cyberspace. The denomination maintains a 115 page website (hht://www.ufmcc.com) with live links to over 65 local MCC webpages, many regional/district websites, and E-mail directories for our member congregations around the globe.

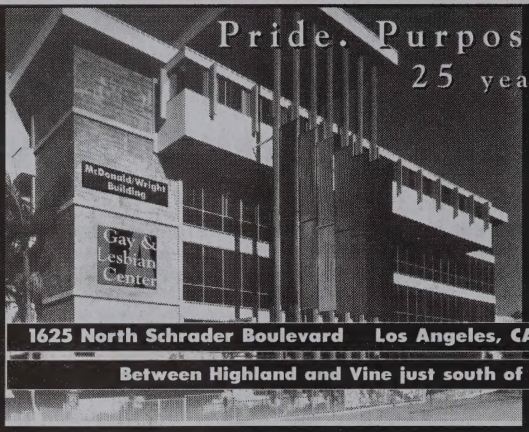
"Our plans for the future include a world-class Communications Center in our new building complex, utilizing the best in existing and emerging technologies to build, strengthen and equip local congregations," Perry added. "Establishing a presence on PlanetOut, both on AOL and the worldwide web, is an important component of our online strategy for UFMCC as we become the "Church for the 21st Century!"

AFRICAN-AMERICAN GAY AND LESBIAN EMPOWERMENT SUMMIT DESCENDS UPON PALM SPRINGS MAY 9-11

Palm Springs, California---Hundreds of African-American gay and lesbian entrepreneurs, business owners and financial consultants will network with gay and non-gay business persons from across the country in the 1st annual African-American Gay and Lesbian Empowerment Summit to be held May 9-11 at the Desert Oasis Estate in Palm Springs, California. Palm Springs, which boasts one of the largest, most diverse and affluent gay communities in the country, along with Cathedral City and other communities of the Coachella Valley, are becoming the destination of choice for many African-American gays and lesbians, many of which are starting businesses and laying down roots in the area.

(continued on page 36)

Gay & Lesbian Center



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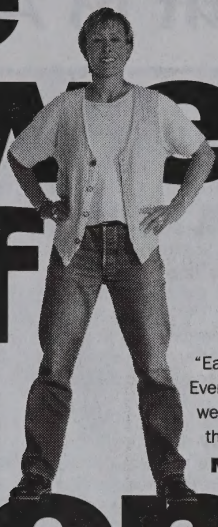

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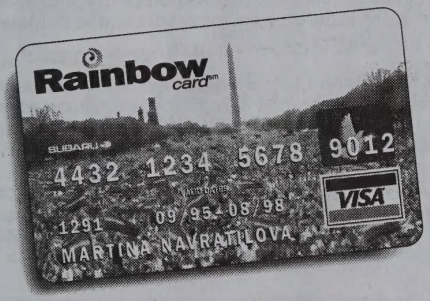

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Out In Africa: 11

by Gavin Hayward

Updates In Namibia

Early in December last year, President Sam Nujoma of Namibia, in an address made to the third Swapo Women's Council congress in Gobabis, called for the uprooting of homosexuality from Namibian society. In statements reminiscent of Mugabe's homophobia in Zimbabwe, Nujoma, and a subsequent statement from SWAPO supporting his position, labeled homosexuality as unAfrican and a European import.

His words are reported to have been: "All necessary stops must be taken to combat all influences that are influencing us and our children in a negative way. Homosexuals must be condemned and rejected in our society."

Soon after his statement, the Namibian gay rights organization, The Rainbow Project, said it wanted to meet the Head of State to clear up misconceptions regarding the sexual orientation of gays and lesbians in Namibia, of which they said they "are proud and not prepared to apologize for."

Gay activists in Namibia were aghast at the turn of events, as in 1990, following discussions with members of the gay community, Prime Minister Hage Geingob assured homosexuals of their rights in terms of Article 10.2 of the country's constitution. Ironically, in 1980 Nujoma received an award from the gay community of San Francisco in recognition of his struggle against discrimination.

There is speculation that aid to Namibia from Scandinavian countries could be cut considerably as it is linked to the human rights records of the recipient country.

The National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality in South Africa has issued a statement expressing serious concern about these developments in a neighboring state, and strong support for the Namibian gay and lesbian community against arbitrary attack and prejudice., They labeled SWAPO's call for action as misguided, "particularly from a liberation movement...which has always fought for equality and justice for all". They added that allegations that homosexuality is foreign to Africa are factually incorrect and inflammatory, saying that it is discrimination that is unAfrican, not homosexuality.

The threat to the gay and lesbian community in Namibia seems to have been the spur to get them organized. They have set up working groups on gay rights, cultural activities, and counseling and AIDS-assistance. They are organizing Safer Sex workshops, the free supply of condoms and a Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. They can be contacted at the e-mail address: sister@grumpy.net.na or call (0926461) 250066.

FORMER PRESIDENT OF HOMOPHOBIC ZIMBABWE OUTED.

Zimbabwean police have instituted investigations into sodomy allegations against former president Professor Canaan Banana after one of his ex-aids-de-camp said in evidence under oath that he suffered from stress after being raped and sexually abused by Banana for several years.

Former police inspector Jefta Dube made these allegations as part of his defense in a case in which he was convicted of the murder of a former police constable. Dube shot his former colleague, Patrick Mashiri, on 24 September 1995 at Gwanzura Stadium after Mashiri had called him "Banana's wife".

Dube's defense was that on that particular night when he committed the offense, he was under the influence of drugs and alcohol and these constituted special circumstances. Dube denied any intention to kill and asserted the victim had insulted him while they were relieving themselves.

Dube claimed that his excessive intake of alcohol and mbanje (marijuana) was because he was haunted by the alleged forced homosexual activity with Professor Banana, which included being sodomized while drunk.

Two psychiatrists testified that Dube suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. On 25 February Justice Bartlett sentenced Dube to ten years imprisonment in the Harare High Court, and recommended that a full criminal investigation be instituted through the Attorney General's office to establish the veracity of Dube's claims of sexual abuse at State House between 1983 and 1986.

Reports from Harare indicate that gays and lesbians in Zimbabwe are celebrating after these revelations which once again debunk the myth that homosexuality is unAfrican as claimed by current president Robert Mugabe.

[Gavin Hayward is the Editor of Exit, a Southern African monthly newspaper published in Kensington. For more information about Exit, you may write them at P.O. Box 28827, Kensington 2101, South Africa. A U.S. subscription to Exit is $60.]

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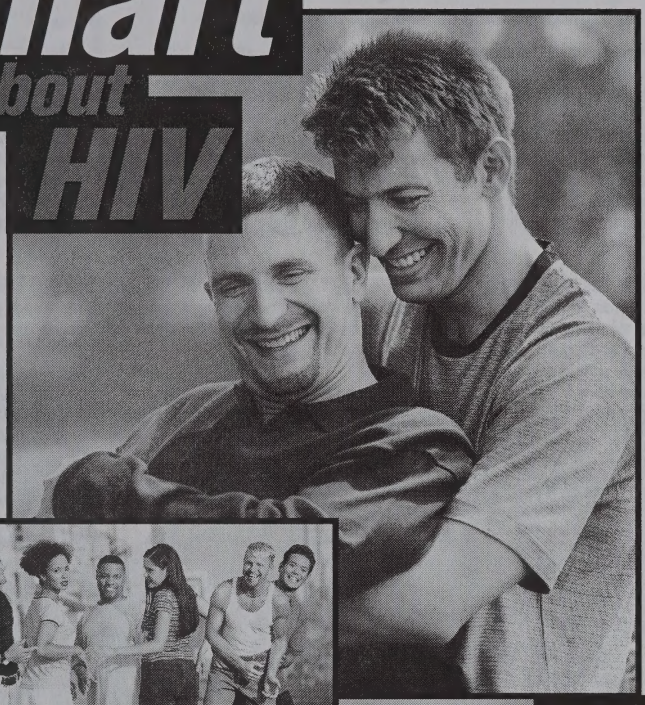

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THE ADODI PRINCIPAL

By Lynwoodt Jenkins, Atlanta Correspondent

Sissy! Punk! Faggot! The intended malice of those words have been heard and/or directed toward most black gay men. The words have ricocheted through us like stray bullets, cut sharp like a surgeon's knife, burned acidly in our psyches, blackened our eyes as though we were in pool hall brawls, and have split our skulls wide open. The words are destructive; Heat seeking missiles used specifically to keep us silent, despaired, and predatory. They are the weapons of the ignorant, those who are unable to, or refuse to acknowledge peacefully, our innate and intimate ability to love other black men.

But Duncan Teague, Tony Daniels, and Malik Williams have altered the painful and nefarious implications of those words, into healing. Collectively known as "Adodi Muse," these men decisively insist upon a reclamation of identity. A claiming of power and a self-accepting cognition. Utilizing the stage as their medium, Adodi Muse informs, educates, and entertains homo and heterosexual audiences here in Atlanta, Georgia.

Sissy! Punk! Faggot! Adodi? Brazen in his approach, Tony was quick to inform me that "Adodi" is derived from the Yoruba language to mean, "A man who sleeps with other men." Elaborating, Tony continued, "It's just another way of calling us faggot. Except, we claimed the title and made 'faggot' what we wanted it to be."

Founded on February 27, 1995 by the suggestion of Jerel Cooper, what they wanted "Adodi" to signify is simple. "To inform other black gay men that it is o.k. to come out of the closet." Said Malik Williams, the cocoa-colored intellectual beauty who joined the ensemble last. "Tony and Duncan are my inspiration. They've helped me to be more accepting of who I am. And now, I just want to pass it on."

Interjecting gracefully in his usual and demanding diva fashion, Duncan stated, "We want to create a space that touches lives." As noted in their artistic statement, "Adodi Muse commits time and energy to the telling of our individual and collective experiences. Performing the work we pen and the work of others who support our survival..." And survival is paramount.

Specifically, the survival of black gay lives and the contributions of those lives who have, and who will continue to battle against adversities. Black gay men who are deserving of respect and brave in conviction, and who are inspiring by example.
Remembering painfully, Tony shared the fact that a close friend of his had died. Afterwards the deceased friend's mother found writings that acknowledged her son's homosexuality. And, in purposeful rage and/or shame, destroyed and discarded those writings as if they were of criminal evidence.

HIV positive for the last twelve years, Tony exclaimed, "I truly believe that, that memory, and the work I do in Adodi Muse, has played a major role in my duration with the virus. As a member of the ensemble, I present my work in blatant dialogue." Securing a lock of the many dreads that adorns his head like a Nubian Samson, Tony further expressed that he challenges not only the silence of HIV, but the silence of homophobia, racism and sexual role playing (top and bottom) in our community at large.

Some may not be prepared for the force that Adodi Muse propels off the stage into the audience. Moving fluid into song, dance and the sometimes shocking but most times exhilarating dialogue, Adodi Muse sets the standard.

Influenced by Essex Hemphill, Assoto Saint, Craig Harris, and Pomo Afro Homos (Post Modern Afro-American Homosexuals), Adodi Muse opened for Craig Hickman's, "Skin and Ornaments" during the National Black Arts Festival in 1996, performed for Charis Bookstore, as well as, the African-American gay and lesbian organizations, In The Life Atlanta, Inc., and 2nd Sunday.

An amalgamation of talent, Adodi Muse is just as profound individually. Duncan is published in Assoto's The Road Before Us, and also in Browning's Culture of Desire. Consistently working, Duncan has received accolades for his performances during Amethyst Pride in Washington, D.C., and more recently playing Lottie Jones in "Three Weeks," at Atlanta's own Center Stage Theater.

Respectively, Tony and Malik have utilized their talents in the performance poetry scene with; Afro Beats, Kalo's Coffee House, and the poetry slam Venus Magazine hosted during the Atlanta Black Gay Pride Celebration in 1995. Moving in the spirit of Essex, Craig Hickman and Assoto, Tony also wrote and performed his one man show, "Miles To Go Before I Sleep", during the 1996 Atlanta Black Gay Pride celebration, hosted by, In The Life Atlanta, Inc.

Sissy! Punk! Faggot! Adodi Muse! A local phenomena, and an exception to the rule.

For booking and/or performance information contact:
Ricky Wilson at 404/728-0617.
Or write: Adodi Muse, P.O. Box 92097, Atlanta, GA 30314

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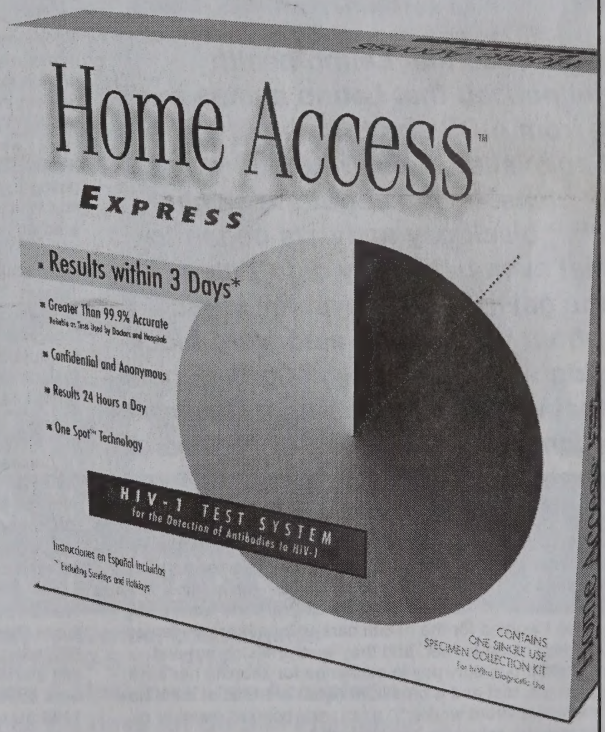

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OUT OF TIME:
THE RACE POLITICS OF AIDS IN PHILADELPHIA

by David R. Fair

For many years, low-income minority people with AIDS and their advocates have complained that they haven't been able to obtain enough public funds to build an AIDS service system that works for communities of color. A recent analysis showed that almost 80% of AIDS funding for direct care services goes to white-led organiza - tions. That report, as well as racial controversy surrounding the allocations and planning processes, have re-awakened debate on how future AIDS funding decisions will be made This article by David R. Fair, founder and first director of the city's AIDS office and the former director of We The People Living with AIDS/HIV, the nation's largest coalition of low-income PWAs, comments on these issues.

When it comes to race politics, the AIDS industry in Philadelphia has simply run out of time.

"It was in 1986 that Latino health activist noticed that Latino babies were dying from AIDS and that the so-called AIDS specialists wouldn't honor their health plans. It was about the same time that black gay activists began to see that even being gay didn't mean that the gay-run AIDS system would care about you---if you also were black and didn't "fit in" to a white gay subcul - ture that was busy focusing its energies on becoming a micro-market for beer companies and fashion magnates."

This year will mark the seventeenth anniversary of one of the first known diagnoses of AIDS in southeastern Pennsylvania -- a black woman, by the way. I knew about that diagnosis -- even though we didn't know it was AIDS --even before the official stats were being kept, because I worked for the health care union that represented the workers who cared for her, and they were freaking out and demanding hazardous duty pay in exchange for keeping her alive. She was a drug addict and a prostitute (what a friend of mine now calls an "industrial street worker"), a not very popular member of what would later be called the "underclass."

She didn't live very long.

From that day forward, a little known fact of life, or maybe of death, has tortured the well-intentioned efforts of thousands of people, both HIV-positive and negative, to keep people living with HIV/AIDS healthy and keep others from getting infected. That little known fact is: AIDS in Philadelphia has never "known no color" or been an "equal opportunity disease." AIDS has always, at least in Philadelphia, been an affirmative action disease, impacting on poor people of color much more directly and tragically than anyone else.

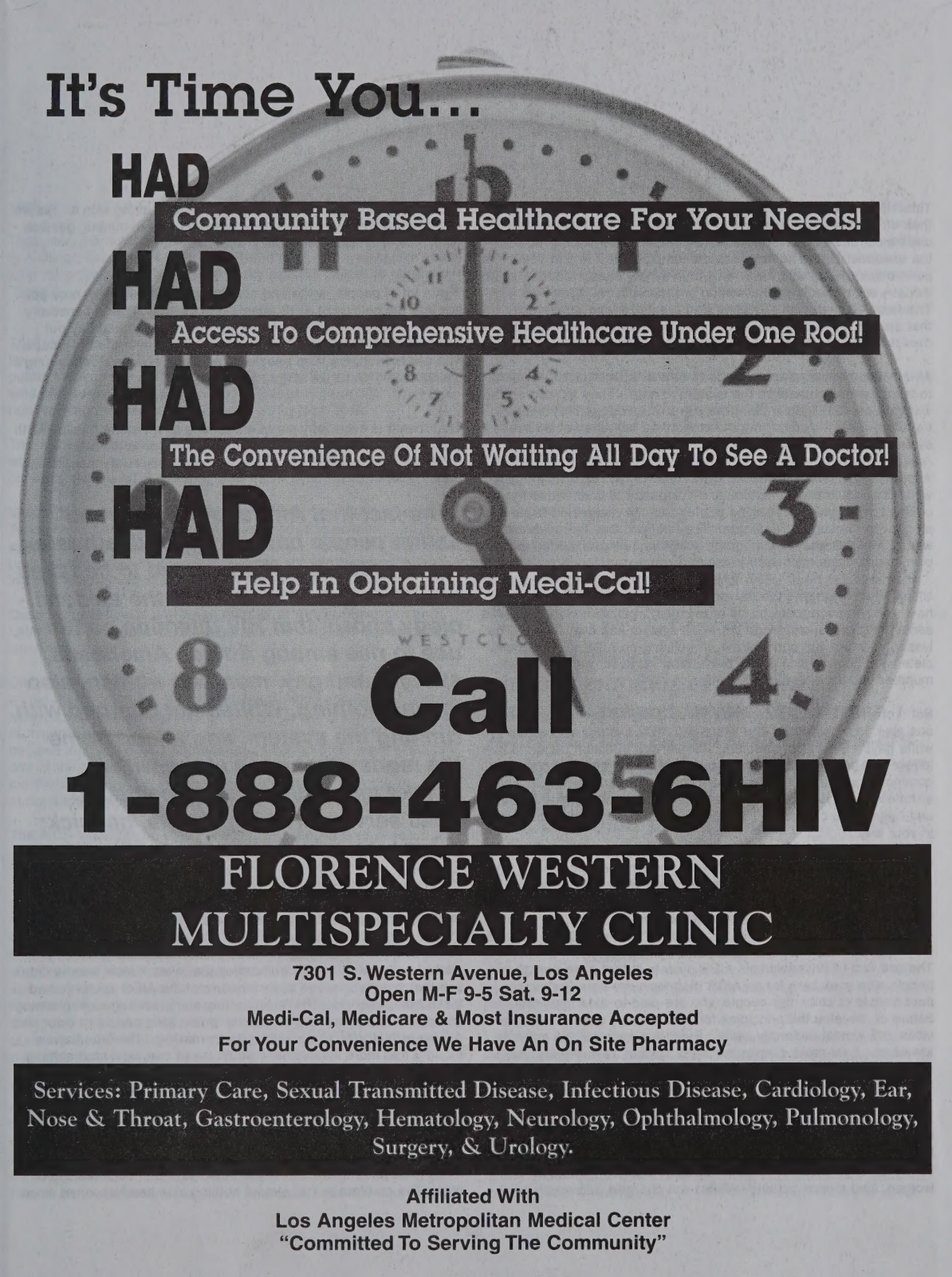
As the epidemic began to spread in the 1980s, Philadelphians, like everybody else, needed to rely on the efforts of the largely middle-class white gay community to do something about it. In 1983, then-city health commissioner Stu Shapiro convened a small meeting in his office of the ten or so people who seemed to really care, and made a commitment that made a lot of sense at the time. Since the media portrayal of AIDS was that it was a white gay disease, and since even most of the blacks getting AIDS were also gay, the AIDS system would be created within the context of that community. Money, as little of it as there was in those days, would be invested in the fledgling health promotion efforts that had already begun to take hold in the gay and lesbian communities, thanks to preexisting epidemics of sexually-transmitted disease. Decisions about what would be done with the money, what it's priorities were, what kind of strategies would be followed, who would get the jobs -- all of that would be left to the best judgment of the gay community leaders who were the first to come forward to combat AIDS.

It made sense, at the time. Not only were gay people obviously facing a genocidal epidemic, but almost everyone else, white and non-white, had their heads in the sand and didn't want to be bothered anyway.

Meanwhile, AIDS surveillance efforts continued in their routine, boring way. The numbers they came up with always showed a tendency toward a reality that the nascent AIDS system seemed unable to recognize. The truth they told betrayed an underlying fact of life that just didn't fit into Dr. Shapiro's well-meaning strategy: AIDS in Philadelphia was not going to be mostly gay for very long, and it was already not mostly white.

In the light of today's reality -- that over 72% of people living with HIV disease in the Philadelphia region are African American or Latino, and overwhelmingly poor -- that early decision might seem short-sighted. After all, it's only a little more than a decade later. But nobody cared about AIDS back in 1983 except for those of us who already were burying our closest friends, and no other choice seemed available.

We can't claim ignorance, though. It was in 1985 that registered nurse Rashidah Hassan saw what was happening and formed BEBASHI -- Blacks Educating Blacks About Sexual Health Issues -- and started experiencing how unresponsive a white gay AIDS network could be when the "consumer" was black and poor. It was in 1986 that Latino health activists like Carmen Paris noticed that Latino babies were dying from AIDS and that the so-called AIDS specialists wouldn't honor their health plans. It was about the same time that black gay activists like Michael Hinson, James Roberts and Tyrone Smith began to see that even being gay didn't mean that the gay-run AIDS system would care about you -- if you also were black and didn't "fit in" to a white gay subculture that was busy focusing its energies on becoming a micro-market for beer companies and fashion magnates. By 1988, even macho neighborhood types like Rev. Henry Wells and Steve Pina of One Day At A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Time had taken notice, trying to build an HIV consciousness into their efforts to create a culture of hope and progress among the city's most disenfranchised African American people: drug addicts, the uneducated, the homeless and unemployable. And in 1989, poor, black people with AIDS -- till then simply cannon fodder for an industry which rarely paid attention to their opinion-- took over We The People Living with AIDS/HIV and created an advocacy effort that sought to put poor, minority PWAs on a path to real influence over how decisions were made that determined their right to life.

All of these people, and hundreds of others, spoke up. They came to the meetings and asked the system to care. They worked on the workgroups, they helped write the plans, they begged for crumbs from the table, they did the work anyway as best they could in a system that was addicted to "building capacity" somewhere else.

And, rapidly, almost right away, they came to the realization that while they could win lip service to the urgency of their cause they couldn't get anywhere near the money that they expected to go along with the supportive words. They noticed that the epidemic of white gay AIDS was, in fact, going away, while the epidemic in their own communities continued to expand.

Ultimately, they learned their lesson, one which the white gays have every reason to be proud of teaching, and which today presents the greatest challenge the AIDS system has ever faced. The lesson is: when you concentrate on building an AIDS system, complete with medical, social and prevention services, within the communities you are targeting, it works.

But it only works for the community you design it for, not for everyone else. In other words, the white gay AIDS system worked for white gays. Fewer got infected. People with infection began to live longer and better. Information about preventing infection became common knowledge, and behaviors changed because people were around to help you believe that saving your own life was important, and helped you overcome all the incentives to not change that got in your way.

It worked for white gays. It didn't work for anyone else. That's why poor African Americans are 850 times more likely to get infected with HIV than whites, according to the only official federal projection for our region that's ever been published.

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The sad fact of Philadelphia's AIDS system is that even though the people who seek care for an AIDS diagnosis are overwhelmingly poor people of color, the people who are paid to determine the nature of, develop the principles for, and actually deliver those services, are almost uniformly white. Even the leading PWA activists are white. Said more simply: the AIDS system as currently constructed is one in which the role of white people is to deliver services, and the role of poor people of color is to receive them.

The fact that African American and Latino people have a higher death rate than whites is not supposed to be taken into account. The fact that the epidemiology shows that HIV infection continues to rise among African Americans, straight and gay, men and women, also means nothing. Whites are charged with running the system, and taking home the money that goes along with it. Blacks and Latinos are expected to need services (which means, get sick; otherwise, why have services?). And die.

***

For a lot of people, white and non-white, the intrusion of race politics into the politics of AIDS seems real painful. This is especially true for those hundreds of people who work day in and day out doing the best they can and feeling powerless over the big picture. The common theme from people on all sides echoes Rodney King's plaintive cry: "Can't we all just get along?"

That theme is especially prevalent among government public health officials, who almost without exception have borne the brunt of racially-tinged criticism but whose actions consistently marginalize

"The fact that African American and Latino people have a higher death rate than whites is not supposed to be taken into account. The fact that the epidemi - ology shows that HIV infection contin - ues to rise among African Americans, straight and gay, men and women, also means nothing. Whites are charged with running the system, and taking home the money that goes along with it. Blacks and Latinos are expected to need services (which means, get sick; otherwise, why have services?) and die."

those who try to open their eyes to what is happening.

There was a brief opening in 1993, when the federal government started telling local health authorities that even if local people didn't see that the "affirmative action" nature of the AIDS epidemic had taken hold, they did. That's when they started telling local planning groups that they had to give priority to involving people of color and people with HIV/AIDS in their decision making. The feds naively thought that more involvement would mean that we'd start shifting funding to AIDS efforts in minority communities, and building capacity where there hadn't been much before. And for a brief moment local officials responded allowing a significant portion of that year's AIDS funding increase (although a small portion of the overall funding available) to be diverted to a project, now called the Minority AIDS Project of Philadelphia and Vicinity, to begin the effort to develop direct care AIDS services within communities of color. The problem is that almost nothing else has happened since

1993.

That year, the number of AIDS case managers employed by minority AIDS groups jumped from zero (remember, this was twelve years after minorities comprised the majority of AIDS cases) to thirteen. Thirteen. It remains thirteen today.

That year, there were no black or Latino AIDS physicians supported by
public AIDS dollars. Now, there's one -- and he works only part-time and doesn't even practice in Philadelphia anymore, traveling here two nights a week from his real job in New York.

That year, four neighborhood-based "extended service centers" were set up to make it easier for low-income blacks and Latinos to connect into the AIDS system. And that's what we have now. Four.

Meanwhile, new clinical services were being developed elsewhere. Tens of new case managers were being hired elsewhere. AIDS-specific mental health programs were set up, home care expanded, peer counseling and services for women and children were receiving dramatically-increased funding. Elsewhere.

Despite the desire of a growing number of African American and Latino service organizations to get into the field, the money mostly went elsewhere.

Despite all the controversy, despite all the "participation," despite all the media attention, despite all the protests and debate, despite all the under-paid or (usually) unpaid volunteer efforts of thousands of minority people, they just weren't allowed in. The AIDS industry became increasingly willing to let them come to the table -- that's one of the reasons that the HIV Commission was established and the Philadelphia AIDS Consortium was reformed, but the practice of not allowing them to share in the meal stayed in place.

The AIDS virus has no color, after all. But the AIDS epidemic does.

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In 1996, things took an important turn. Leading African American political figures -- State Sen. Hardy Williams, City Council President John Street and other black council members, State Reps. Dwight Evans, Vince Hughes, Harold James, Congressman Chaka Fattah --finally took the issue seriously. Most of them aren't very informed about what people with HIV/AIDS in their communities really need, and some of them are still hampered by homophobic and (what some contend are) ethically-challenged intentions. But in the down-and-dirty world of real politics, they had no trouble grasping the basic truth: the money wasn't going where it was supposed to go.

The political facts of life about AIDS and communities of color have changed. By and large, the African American and Latino communities are no longer in denial about the impact of AIDS. And in the larger world of old-fashioned politics, AIDS is no longer gay, and because of the disproportionate impact of the epidemic in minority communities, AIDS has now become the "property" of minority politics. A Mayor or a city councilman or a commissioner here or there might still respond to white gay politicos when it comes to AIDS, but the handwriting is on the wall: the black and Latino communities, and their political leaders, now realize that AIDS is their problem more than it is anyone else's, and the political officeholders have taken notice. And what's changed is that minority politicians have, finally, started to use their political weight to force the AIDS industry to finally do what it should have started doing seventeen years ago.

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For the industry itself, this couldn't be happening at a worse time.

The PWA movement is growing weaker, distracted from its angry, demanding roots by the condescending decision to "allow" people with HIV to "participate" in more numbers in planning processes. That these processes have proven ultimately disempowering, especially to poor minority PWAs, has so far escaped notice. Built on the concept of co-optation and delay, they burden inexperienced and unpaid PWAs with countless intimidating meetings dominated by kindly bureaucrats and held on the principle of keeping everyone well-behaved -- a principle that has always been deadly to PWAs. That these processes violate the historical reality that progress for people with HIV/AIDS has never been achieved without anger, confrontation and a willingness to go to the mat on everything seems to be lost on most of today's crop of PWA

"The political facts of life about AIDS and communities of color have changed. By and larges, the African American and Latino communities are no longer in denial about the impact of AIDS...the black and Latino communi - ties, and their political leaders, now realize that AIDS is their problem more than anyone eles's."

activists, who seem more flattered to simply be there than energized to use their power in their own self-interest. That most real progress in Philadelphia has come from the leadership of poor African American PWAs also seems to have been forgotten, even by the poor black PWAs who still hold seats on the councils of so-called power.

Long-time centers of PWA advocacy like ACT UP and We The People suffer in this reality. ACT UP struggles for an agenda as its traditional media-oriented strategy and dependence on white non-PWAs reduces its impact. WTP, now a major AIDS service organization in its own right, finds itself in the fearful position of having to bite the hands that feed it. The loss of its founding PWA activists and the burnout of those who followed, most of whom are preoccupied with the daily realities of administering a 3,000-strong, very needy membership, leads to an understandable lack of institutional memory, and a downgrading of WTP's prominent history of direct

action. The momentum for organizing black people with HIV/AIDS and encouraging their leadership of advocacy efforts has shifted, from its historic base at WTP to groups like Project TEACH and One Day At A Time, neither of which was established for that role nor will ever be comfortable in pursuing it.

The mainstream AIDS system is also, to put it bluntly, tired. A few years ago, most white AIDS providers would have been troubled by a shift to a minority-focused AIDS bureaucracy, but would probably have been creative in trying to at least fit in. Now, most of the committed employees of AIDS organizations are simply too burned out to contemplate the nature of such a change or how it would affect their clients and their jobs.

Interestingly, even with all the charges of racism made about how allocations end up being made, few direct providers of service are perceived, even by the most militant minority advocates, as racist themselves. The criticisms are based on systemic issues, not personal ones.

But when the battle is pursued by the Hardy Williamses and John Streets of the world, those subtleties go by the wayside. Their bottom line -- the only one that matters, now that the AIDS industry has ignored the need to build minority capacity so well for so many years -- is money.

White AIDS activists, and many of those who are black and Latino, are offended by the focus on money. We're all supposed to be here because we care. But in the real world the facts show that the people with the money are the ones who survive -- a lesson that's not been lost on those, including poor black and Latino PWAs, who now advocate for a fundamental change in who's getting paid.

More money, of course, is not the only answer. We still need to struggle with the uncomfortable reality that minority capacity simply does not exist in some important areas where services are currently provided by white groups. The Minority AIDS Project of Philadelphia itself is relatively inexperienced in supporting direct care groups, having focused primarily on prevention and "risk reduction" activities since that's the only money it was allowed to get. And building a network of AIDS services in poor black and Latino communities is ultimately much more complex than the effort to do so in the middle-class white gay community ever was, with cultural norms, homophobia, class issues and the like playing a much more prominent role.

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There are actually two bottom lines facing us.

Yes, one is money. If we keep spending the money the way we're currently spending the money, the charge that white people live off AIDS and people of color die from it will only become more true. We have to change the way we're spending the money. That's it. Just do it.

The other bottom line is, we have to do it right.

Where there's present capacity, such as in case management, mental health and substance abuse treatment, alternative therapies, food, emergency assistance, home care, etc., the choice is clear. Shift the money from where it is to the minority groups that are already in place and doing a good job, whether they are presently part of MAPP or not. There's a lot of them out there, if only we would reach out to them.

Where there's not present capacity for high-quality AIDS services, such as in the area of primary medical care, the choice is also clear. Invest in building networks of minority doctors and medical providers, use AIDS money to assure quality training and ongoing medical education, and to alleviate their financial risk. Do what Stu Shapiro and his successors Maurice Clifford and Bob Ross and Estelle Richman did when they thought the issue was building capacity in the white gay framework.

Build it. But this time build it where it counts now. And accept the unalterable fact that since it's low-income African American and Latino people living with HIV who the system is supposed to be helping, they're going to have to have a leading role in determining what happens.

Help them. Don't disempower them. Train them if they need it, not only on the standards of this or that service, but on the basic principles of how to overcome the intimidation and complexity of how decisions are made.

Where there's political issues -- like homophobia and the flight of the black and Latino middle class from the intractable problems of the underclass -- fight over them. If black and Latino providers are not thought to be AIDS-competent, teach them, and if they won't learn, throw them out. If you subscribe to the (I think unwarranted) belief that black and Latino political leaders are homophobic or have questionable motives, turn the lights on them. Take the risks. Those issues won't go away if we don't deal with them directly.

And bring the full weight of the public health system and its basic principles, and the conscious, angry, outspoken voice of minority PWAs -- to bear in those battles. It's the only way to win.

What could result, if we accept the basic reality that we have to start spending the money differently, is a new kind of partnership, one that builds on the expertise of the past to invest in a new and more promising future.

It takes vision, perhaps more than our present leaders possess. It takes courage, something that's always been in short supply in the public health bureaucracy in Philadelphia. It takes trust, something those in charge today will have a hard time getting since they haven't earned it. It takes a willingness to allow new leaders to have their chance; the ones we've had haven't been all that stellar, after all, and it's not fair to require guarantees now that those leaders be trustworthy by old standards when we've never required such guarantees before.

We just have to do what it takes, now and forever. We can't give up. None of us, whatever the pain or the challenges, has the right to give up.

The Last Time I had Sex…

Please read this statement and then complete the survey below:

Despite good penetration from safer sex educational efforts, recent studies report an increase in potentially unsafe sex behaviors among gay men and other men who have sex with men. This research study hopes to assist in making safer sex education more effective.

Your responses will be anonymous and all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. You must be at least 18 to complete this survey.

This survey should take about 5 minutes to complete. Please fill it out alone and answer each question honestly and openly. This survey is voluntary and you don't have to answer any question you don't want to answer. Although you may not benefit directly from this research, this study will potentially contribute to improving safer sex education and reducing the spread of HIV.

This research is being done by Dennis Sapire as part of his graduate training for a doctorate in psychology at the California School of Professional Psychology. Some of the questions in this study may leave you feeling uncomfortable. If this should happen, Dennis Sapire, or the supervisor of this study, Linda Beckman, Ph.D., who is on the faculty of CSPP, will be available to talk to you and can be reached via (818) 284-2777 x 3043.

Please mark an "X" at the end of this sentence to indicate that you have read these paragraphs and understand them, and based on this information, that you agree to participate in this study. (Mark "X" here → ___)

Please complete all questions. Do not put your name anywhere on this form.
Thank you for participating in this survey.

Please return the completed survey within 10 days to:
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Background Information:

1. Age: ____ years
2. ZIP code _____
3. Ethnicity _____
4. Education ___ Below High School ___High School ___College ___Graduate/Professional School
5. Orientation ___Gay ___Bi ___Straight
6. Aware of your HIV status? ___Yes ___No
7. (Optional) HIV status ___+ ___-
8. Rate the following sex acts from 1 to 5 on the basis of how intimate they are for you ("1" being least intimate to "5" being most intimate):
   ___Mutual masturbation ___Oral sex ___Deep kissing ___Cuddling/Massage ___Anal sex

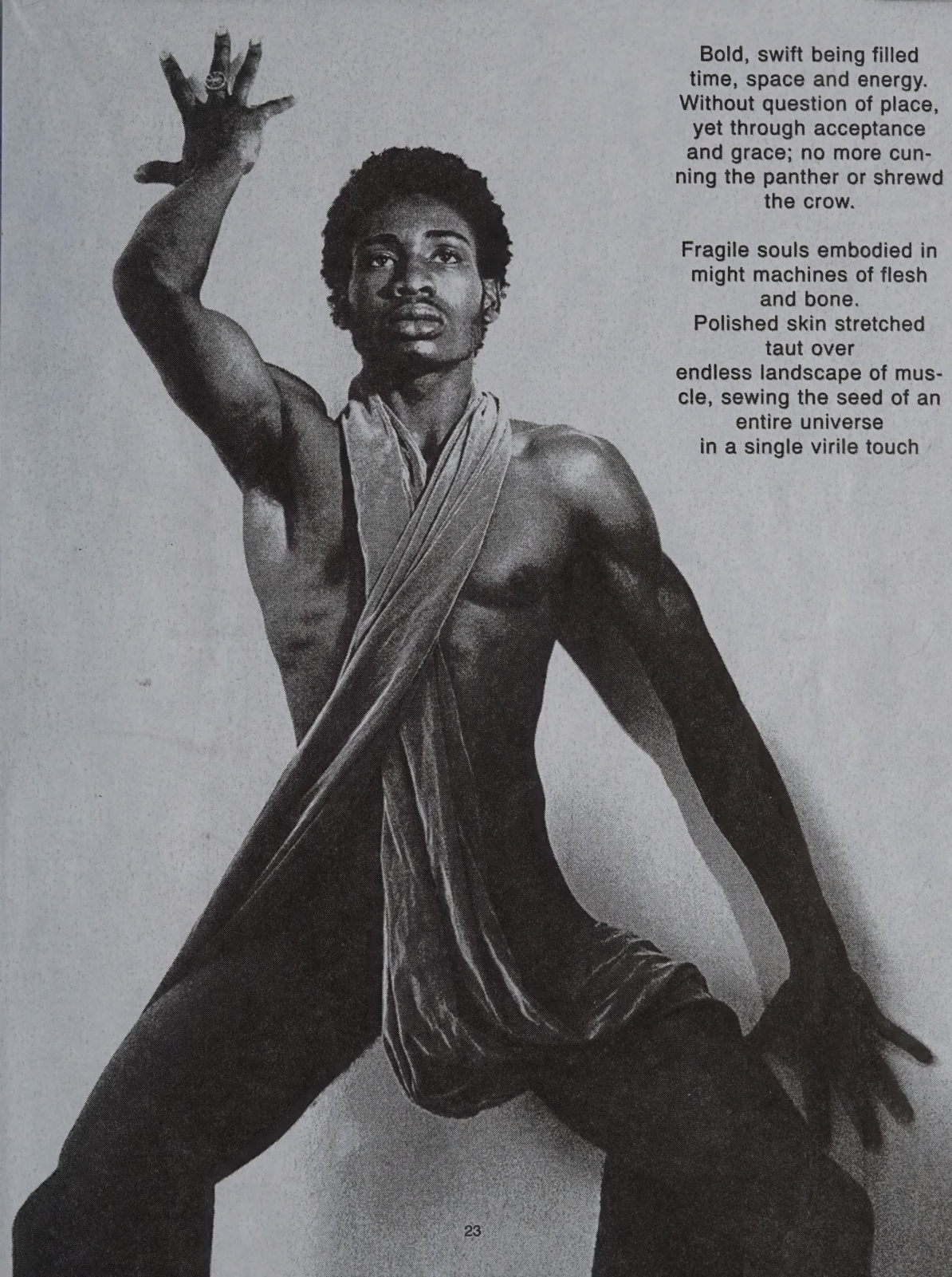
The last time you had sex with another single man -

9. Were you single? ___Yes ___No
10. How old was your partner? ___ years (Please estimate)
11. Was this your ___1st ___2nd ___3rd (or more) time together?
12. Approximately how long ago did it happen? ___ Days ___Weeks ___Months ___Years
13. Which of these did you do? (check all that apply)
    ___Mutual Masturbation ___Deep Kissing ___Anal sex ___Cuddling/Massage ___Oral sex
14. If you had anal sex, were you ___top ___bottom ___both?
15. Did you want to do things your partner was not willing to do? ____Yes ____No
16. If you answered "yes" to 15, which of these would you have done if your partner had been willing?
    ___Mutual Masturbation ___Deep Kissing ___Anal sex ___Cuddling/Massage ___Oral sex
17. How sexually attractive was your partner? (please circle)
    Least sexy man I would have sex with 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Most sexy man I can imagine having sex with
18. Where (between "1" and "10") do you think your partner would have rated you on sexual attractiveness?
    Lowest 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Highest
19. If you had oral sex, did you use a condom? ___Yes ___No
20. If you had anal sex, did you use a condom? ___Yes ___No

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

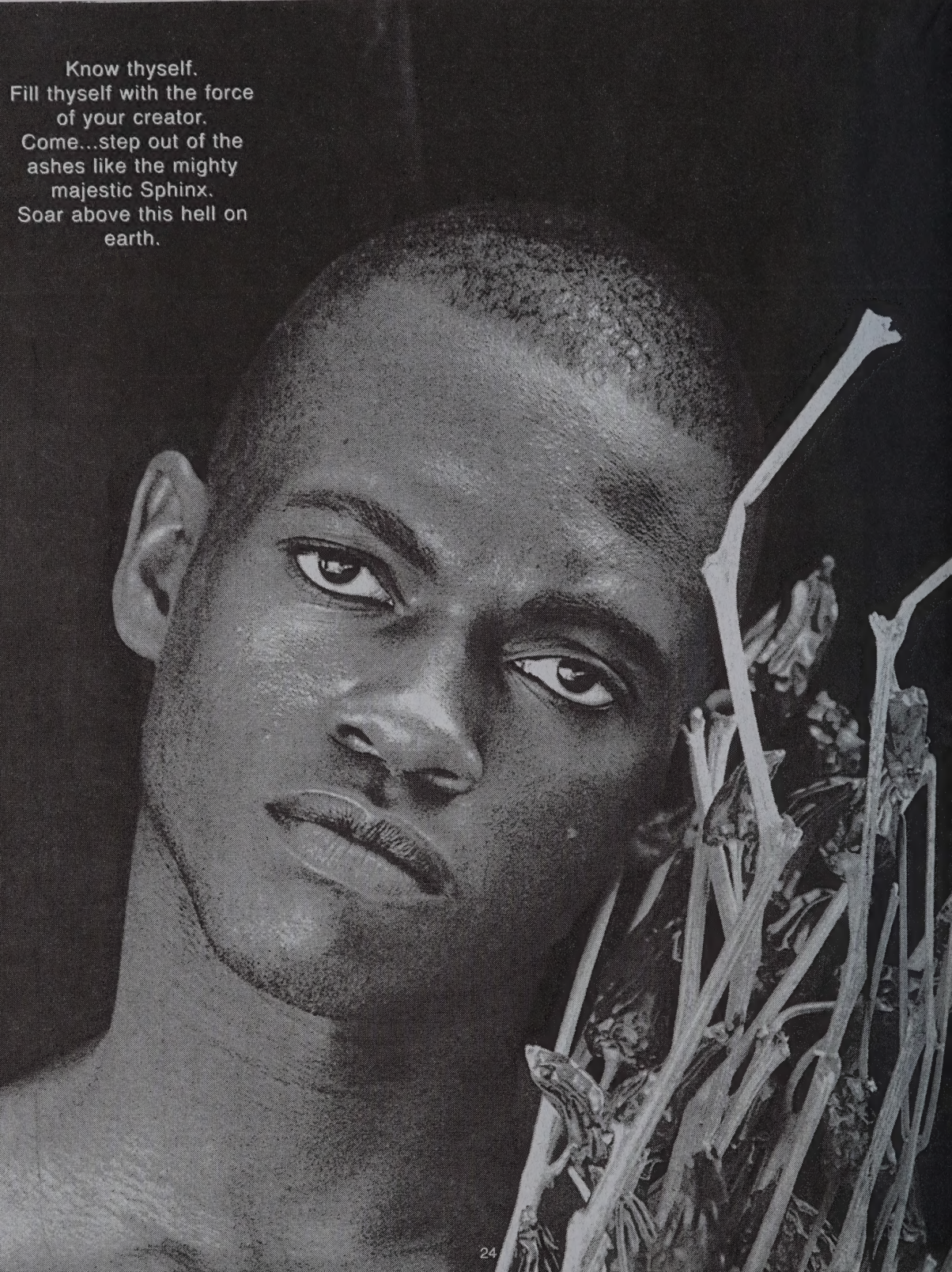
He

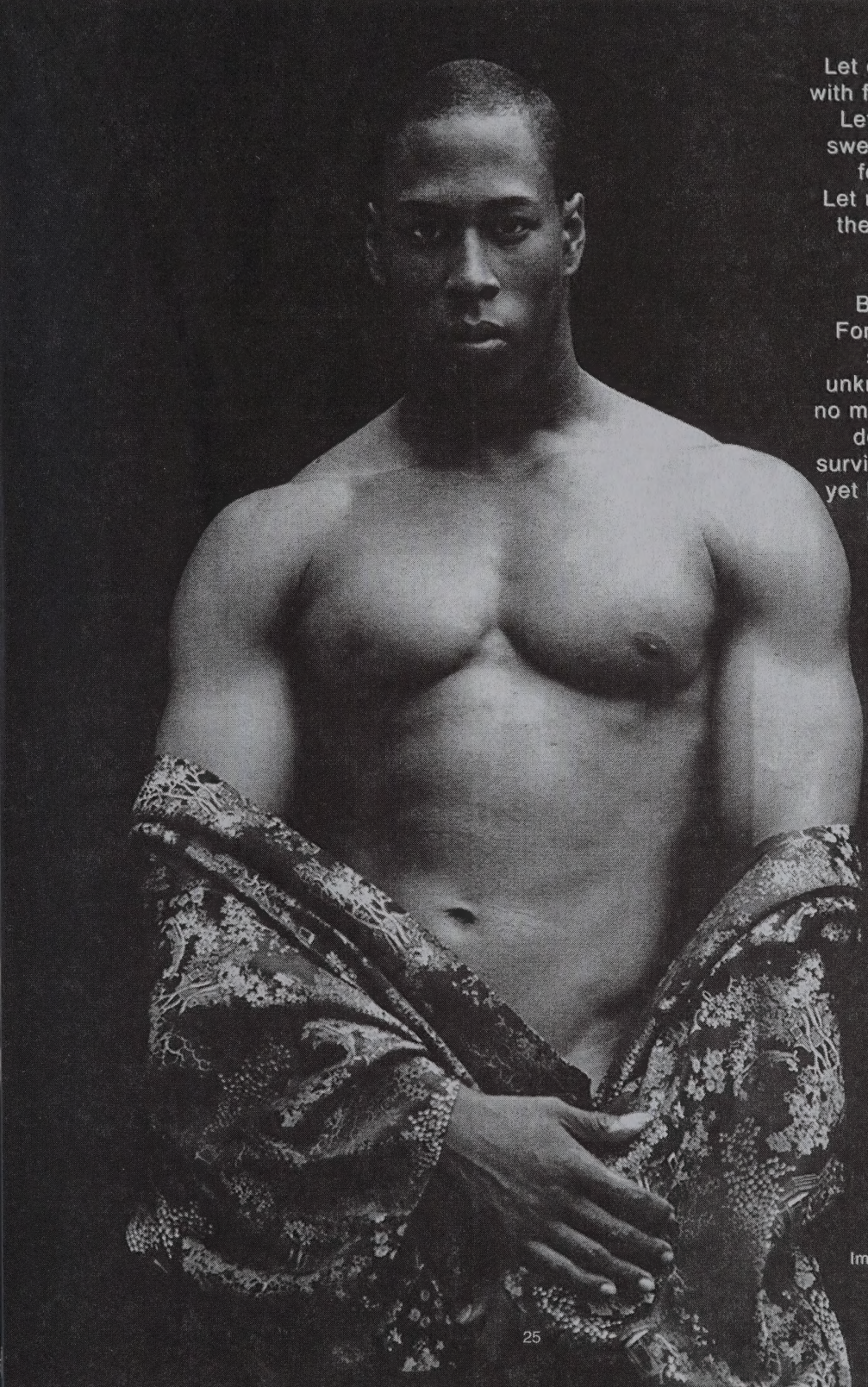
He walks at peace
with the ground
beneath his feet
and when it is time
he moves with the
spirit of his brothers
with whom he shares
this earth
Strong, lean, child of
GOD. Step out of the
blackness of night
with open eyes
reflecting the truth of
our universe
of which you are part
and whole.



Bold, swift being filled
time, space and energy.
Without question of place,
yet through acceptance
and grace; no more cunning the panther or shrewd
the crow.

Fragile souls embodied in
might machines of flesh
and bone.
Polished skin stretched
taut over
endless landscape of muscle, sewing the seed of an
entire universe
in a single virile touch


Know thyself.
Fill thyself with the force of your creator.
Come...step out of the ashes like the mighty majestic Sphinx.
Soar above this hell on earth.



Let quiet lips burst
with fruits of wisdom.
Let soulful eyes
swell with passion
for life itself.
Let nostrils flair for
the air that is all
yours.

Be not weak.
For when it is all
said of this
unknown creature;
no more delicate the
desert flower,
surviving on nothing
yet having created
everything.

Images and text by
Davide
213.467.5300

photo by DAVIDE

CELEBRATING A GATHERING OF LIKE SOULS: THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY NATIONAL BLACK LESBIAN AND GAY CONFERENCE AND INSTITUTES

written and photographed
by William H. Jones Jr.

Oakland, California---I would journey to Long Beach in Southern California to seek spiritual renewal. Creating personal emotional connections with fellow freedom fighters would be my highest priority. It has become clear that our liberation will not come through the political process (though that remains very important). It would come from the collective liberation of our souls.

Spirit would be the focus of this weekend. We would be asked to open our hearts wide open, engage in the internal Jihad of spiritual work to transform our lives; bond with our fellow participants, and enlighten our community by becoming archetypes of the kind of people we wish to live around.

Thursday

The day was set aside for HIV issues. Former Surgeon General Doctor Joycelyn Elders, the keynote speaker, thanked us for giving her our support while she was in office as well as sticking with her after she was relieved of her duty.

Concerned that families are still not talking about HIV, Doctor Elders stated that comprehensive health education in the schools is a major priority and stressed the importance of gay and lesbian youth having mentors to talk to. She also emphasized the need to educate the church because "nobody has yet. They have to do more than moralize from the pulpit."

Later that morning I attended a workshop given by Kwame Banks titled To Be Young Gifted and...

Many issues were discussed. Among them, the search for identity---who am I, where can I get positive messages from? Many black gay youth have to cope with the issue of shame. Some are throwaway youth; rejected by parents for their sexual nature. Others must deal with not only society's bigotry toward male effeminacy and female masculinity but that same kind of bigotry within the homosexual community. Support for gay youth is critical and it was acknowledged emphatically the need for individuals who can relate and offer that support.

Later in the day I attended the HIV luncheon before taking a time out for personal relaxation---a long hot bath, incense, wine, candles and jazz. A soothing party for one.

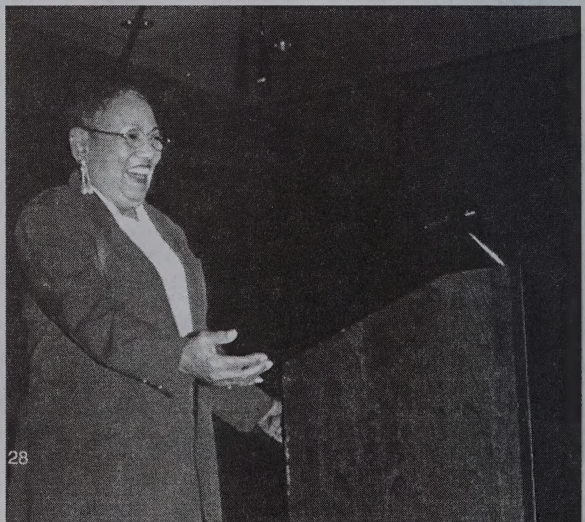
I then returned to the workshops where I saw noted HIV expert and physician Dr. Wilbert Jordan. He introduced me to the audience as one of his most angry and hostile patients who came to be one of his most loved patients.

That evening I attended a Pajama Jam across town where, even though there weren't a lot a jammies, there was great dancing, great fun and great fellowshipping. A perfect close for day one.

Friday

Blaine Teamer, activist, actor and writer---2 years ago he was honored with an SBC Brother of the Year Award for "Black Coffee", his brilliant stage play that chronicled 20th Century black gay America as it passed through the confines of a small black gay owned coffee shop---was featured on this day's luncheon, as he read from his new novel, "The Secret Life of Sister Little: Confessions of A Funeral Director".

The evening reception and program began with a wonderful ceremony depicting our experience in America and featured a great love poet, June Jordan, speaking, appropriately on this day, Valentine's Day. The theme of her presentation---and for me the entire conference--- was "Changing The World Through Creating Revolutionary Personal Relationships". During the 60's she was concerned that the change of



emphasis from black power to black is beautiful would dull the focus of the movement. It took falling for a co-worker for her to ease her fears. Her relationship energized her commitment to the struggle beyond any level of enthusiasm she formerly experienced.
Her words:

"Is it sexual or racial identity that will catapult each of us into creative urgency with social change? I do not believe that who you are guarantees anything important about what you will choose to mean in the context of other lives... How do our personal issues diffuse or propel our personal commitments? ... The greater Jihad or the greater struggle takes place within us. ... It is time to begin the greater Jihad. It's time to scrutinize ourselves, to identify and to determine what exactly do we signify on principle..... As long as there are lesbian and gay Americans who view sexuality as a first and last defining facet of their existence and therefore will not fight for the preservation, improvement and democratization of public education; then for that cause, I am not one with you. You are not one with me.

"My fight for sexual freedom, my fight for the right to hold my lover's hand or to kiss her lips in every day life is a personal fight. It is part of a personal fight for freedom. So in my own greater Jihad I am struggling to make absolutely manifest a principled commitment to the principles of freedom and equality. And I believe that this is the righteous struggle and this must continue if I hope to deserve coalitional support for my love,my people, my country, my world. That is how I see change happening. First and finally, it must happen in my own heart and my own mind. ...IF we will only join together, equally acknowledging our needs and desires as equally valid and together commit to freedom and commit to equality with the fundamentals of a universal human rights agenda., then we can be successful, a whole gang of principled comrades hanging out; close, solid, clear and invincible."

There was much to think about in our Sister's words; much to ponder throughout the reception given by the National Task Force on AIDS Prevention that followed.

Immediately following the reception was the Friday Cabaret. Among the many stellar performers was a troupe from Chicago, The Real Read, formed by Byron Stewart. They entertained with material that chronicled the love lives of black gay men living in the hood. The most powerful of their pieces featured a young street hustler living in sexual denial even as he enjoys sex with his male customers more and more.

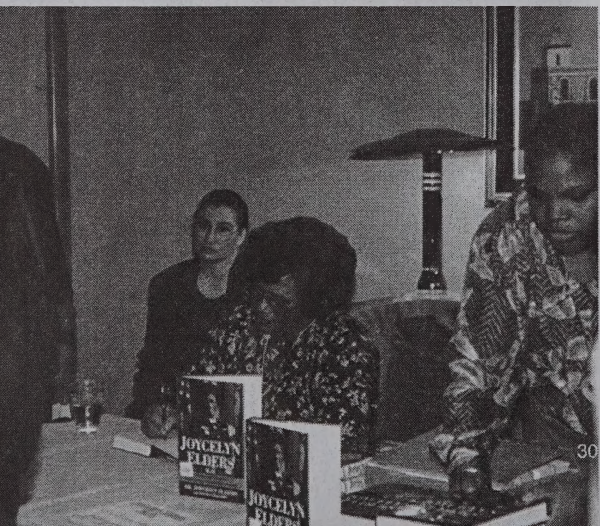
Later that night was a dance where the energy was electric and it seemed as if every fine brotha from the Conference was on the dance floor. With my head filled with dreams, it was time to retire for the night and let sleep feed my fantasies.

Saturday

The morning began with the opening plenary conducted by Pulitzer Prize winning author and activist Alice Walker. She read from her latest book entitled "Anything We Love Can Be Saved", a treatise on becoming motivated toward activism, and later implored us to liberate ourselves from the oppression of orthodox Christianity:

"We have to deal with our indoctrination. ' In sorrow I shall bring forth children; and my desire shall be to my husband, and he shall rule the universe over thee'---Genesis...What a burden to think one is conceived in sin rather than in pleasure, that one is born into evil rather than into joy...What is happening in the world more and more is that people are attempting to decolonize their spirits. A crucial act of empowerment, one that might return revenue to the earth, thereby saving it.

"Sister Walker, my mother, was thanked for making the church so beautiful. But this wise woman who knew so many things about life and the



mysteries of the heart, the spirit and the soul, was never asked to speak to the congregation.

"'Pagan' means 'of the land, country dweller', all of which my family was. It also means a person's primary spiritual relationship with nature...but there was no way to ritually express the magical intimacy with creation without being accused and ridiculed."

That night was the Awards Banquet where recognition was given to many who have unselfishly maintained the struggle for the struggle's sake alone, without personal glory. It was a night for their struggles to be glorified.

It is about trusting the universe. I was fretting about how I would get from my hotel in Long Beach to Agape Church located 50 plus miles west in the city of Santa Monica without a car. Well, as fate and trust would have it, I found a friend who belonged to the same faith as I and to the same church.

After the Awards Ceremony we watched the performers in an evening of black gay and lesbian culture. Afterwards---about 1 in the morning---I dropped by the dance to shake my booty just a little. My friend and I hooked up afterwards and drove to his place for the night.

Sunday

Morning. Beautiful. Warm. Clear. Dressed and mellow, I lounged on the porch of his apartment while he dressed for church. We made the 9 am service at Agape Church of Religious Science. The minister, Dr. Michael Beckworth, had a message: 'Don't limp into life, leap into life.'

I've been doing that all weekend.

My friend dropped me back off at the Hilton in Long Beach, arriving just in time for the Sunday luncheon. I hugged him and watched him speed away. Instead of packing I take that final bath, then head for the luncheon. My mood turned to tears. Friends I had made during the weekend were beginning to depart. I presented a belated Valentine's card to another friend, thanking him for helping make my weekend a great one. Not wanting this experience to end, I still had not completed packing, and it was 2:30 pm when my father and brother came for my bags, interrupting a spiritual reading I was having.

But all things must end. Each time I attend the National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Conference, I make personal resolutions to continue the struggle and not backslide into feeling that mundane conditions have power over me.

As June Jordan's words gave us a manifesto for the conference, as well as a strategy to conduct our struggle for our liberation, the words of Cornel West, another distinguished conference speaker, admonished us to pay close attention to the world we live in:

"What we love well in our short lives constitutes our heritage. This struggle raises the fundamental question; what does it really mean to be human? Defining ourselves in relation to those we lovingly bury, we have to be able to situate ourselves in a story bigger than us, that relates ourselves to the dead so that we can project our future grounded in the struggle. To raise the question of being human is to wrestle with the problem of evil. It requires the most difficult form of courage. The courage to be. The courage to love."

I continue my internal Jihad each day; to confront the concept of lack and create relationships built on faith and trust.

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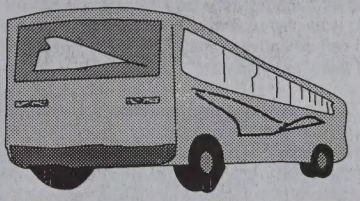
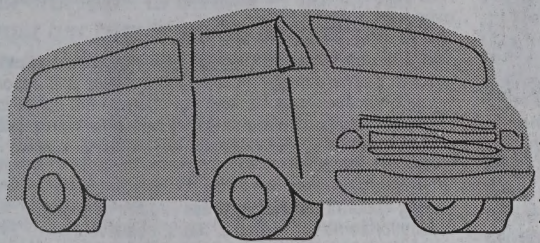


1•800•939•9876



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- Food Bank, Support Groups, Social Services
- Bus Passes & Tokens
- MTA Blue and Red Line Passes and Tokens
- Taxi Cab Vouchers

Here's How Far You Can Take Us For A Ride:

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- South to Carson, Lakewood, & Long Beach
- East to Downey, Paramount, Maywood and Downey
- West to Culver City

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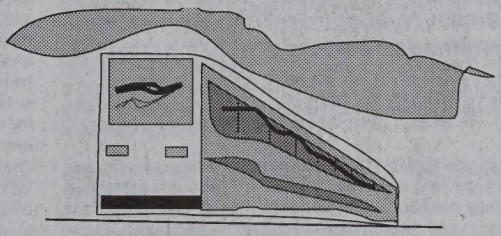
We will give you free round trip transportation for all your HIV-AIDS related appointments in Los Angeles County. This includes all medical or alcohol and drug treatments appointments. Call SLACAP Transportation Services at 1•800•939•9876



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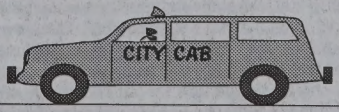

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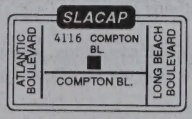


Funded by RYAN WHITE Comprehensive AIDS Research Emergency (CARE ACT) 1990

THE EMPOWERMENT COLLECTIVE: THE CONTENT OF OUR ENTREPRENEURIAL CHARACTER

by
Donald L. Perry II
Managing General Partner, Pine Cobble Partners

"The barriers to black progress in America today are clearly as much psychological as they are social or economic. We have suffered as much as any group in human history, and if this suffering has enno - bled us, it has also wounded us and pushed us into defensive strate - gies that are often self-defeating...so that we are victimized as much by our own buried fears as by racism."

---Shelby Steele, The Content of Our Character

As a management consultant, I routinely help clients deal with difficult strategic issues such as What customers to focus on or How to cre-ate value in their customer relationships or How to respond to a changing competitive environment. The answers to these issues are often critical to the ultimate success or failure of the entrepreneurial firm and thankfully, these issues are totally devoid of race. However, for African-American entrepreneurs, there is an entire other dimen-sion of issues which is almost totally about race, about the relation-ships with our black brothers and sisters. When entrepreneurs are in

"Black people, in general, have built such a wide and deep repertoire of defensive strate - gies to protect ourselves from the pain of racism, that in the process, we have severely stunted the potential of our community to achieve a measure of self-sufficiency, econom - ic self-determination and wealth."

the grip of this other dimension, all too often the people with the greatest promise have the most difficult time finding success. In this other dimension, the tools of even the best consultant are useless.

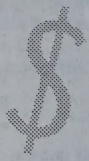
Our community is riddled with Streets, Avenues, Boulevards, Circles and Places, each carrying the hopes and dreams of some entrepre-neur and her family, nestled on the sidewalk, behind some storefront, on a factory floor, in an office high above the noise and bustle. But look closely and one can see the tattered edges and fraying fabric of hopes stretched taut and the shards of dreams shattered. Martin Luther King, Vermont, Western, Central, Adams, Jefferson, Crenshaw, Florence, pick one, pick another, it matters not because on all of these streets, all throughout our community there are places where hope lies dormant and dreams are dead and the streets are not paved with gold. Listen to the voices and beneath the bluster of "things in the works", "big deal cookin'" and "movin' so fast, don't have time to stop", there is the plaintive and melancholy sound of souls in torment, caught between the desire for success and the fear of acquiring it.

Black people, in general, have built such a wide and deep repertoire of defensive strategies to protect ourselves from the pain of racism, that in the process, we have severely stunted the potential of our community to achieve a measure of self-sufficiancy, economic self-determination and wealth. Thus, we settle for less than we should, thinking it is all we can get or all that we are entitled to. Thus, we avoid going outside of our own when building a business because we fear that white folks won't buy from us. Thus, we spend years getting credentials and degrees only to charge less for our knowledge and skill than it cost to acquire them, because we don't think people will pay for quality from a black man. Thus, we refuse to do business with our black brothers and sisters unless we have no other alternatives, because...because...because we are ashamed and we want so des-perately to belong, to be accepted, to be welcomed, to be invited into that warm and happy place that is reflected back to us from the tele-vision set where everything is better, finer, purer and the ice is colder.

How are we to build a strong and viable black community when we are so conflicted by our own fears, self-doubt, rage and ignorance?

How are we to trust our black brothers and sisters when we do not even trust ourselves?

These are the fundamental issues which confront us as the new mil-lennium dawns with still more bright promises and opportunities. Will we as black people finally take our share of the riches to come or will we be left wailing in our ghettos for handouts from a disinterested society that has no more time for us, no more need for us, no more desire to hear us?



Having endured the most repressive form of human cruelty for some two hundred years, I believe that black people are particularly well prepared to thrive and prosper in a hostile environment. When my clients call me, they do so because the world they knew, the comfortable place that allowed them to earn a good living, has ceased to exist and all around them are hostile forces eager to forcibly take their customers, their employees, their secrets and their future away from them. My clients have had it too easy too long that they have forgotten how to fight for survival. But we blacks know all about survival. We wrote the book. Looking into the new millennium, know-ing how to survive will be one of the most valuable skills for any entrepreneurial firm to possess. Being able to respond, adapt, change and stay flexible without losing the vital sense of Knowing Who You Are and Knowing Where You Come From, these are what black people learned while in chains and thus we have a great head start on everyone else as the millennium approaches. Because our survival skills will be THE most important skills in the 21st Century.

In an entrepreneurial context, we can build companies that sell exclu-sively to non-blacks, and it won't affect our ability to remain black. We can dream of billion dollar deals and know that our brains are the same as anyone else's and with equal skill, equal daring and equal bits of providence, we, too can become wealthy beyond measure. Above all, just because our skin is dark doesn't mean that we can't

"Having endured the most repressive form of human cruelty for some two hundred years, I believe that black people are partic - ularly well prepared to thrive and prosper in a hostile environment."

have all the marbles or that we can't have our cake and eat it too, if that is what we want to try to do. We can have high ambitions and we can attain them. We can build better mouse traps and make ice that is cooler than any other.

But to do any of these things, we must first learn to believe in our-selves and to trust our hearts and to look for our reflection in the

eyes of our brothers and sister. We must learn to see ourselves both as we would wish to be seen and as others see us. We must put humility before pride and truth before dishonor. We must remember those lessons our grandmothers taught us, about kindness, courtesy, respect and the golden rule---about doing unto others as we would have them do unto us. We must remember our values as black people, how our community standing with us can make us stronger and more powerful than standing strongly by our self, alone. But we must

"We must first learn to believe in ourselves and to trust our hearts and to look for our reflection in the eyes of our brothers ands sisters."

know, as well, that if we should stand alone against the world, we have an indomitable spirit that is also a legacy of our past and it will shield us and provide strength when we thought we had none. We must have patience with our brothers and sisters and show them the other cheek even when they have hurt us. We must reach out to them and hold them and heal them and help them deal with the pain, the rage, the fear and the longing which have so crippled them.

If we build businesses which embody these values and which reflect these ideals, then black entrepreneurs can accomplish anything they wish to achieve. Look around and listen to the horrors of "downsizing", "right-sizing", "restructuring" and re engineering" and you will see the failure of Corporate America in the making. Big companies have forgotten the basic values and principles of good living and good community. Their error will make it difficult for them to attract good workers, who increasingly desire to balance work and family life; or to gain customer loyalty, since customers cannot receive exceptional service from a dispirited work force. If black entrepreneurs build their firms around the values and principles that Corporate America has so cavalierly abandoned, then the new millennium will indeed be a successful and prosperous place for our community. Because these principles are part of the legacy we built during our servitude in chains and they helped us to endure the injustices we faced then and today. They are the principles in our spirituals and they are the substance of our mothers' prayers for our lives to

If black entrepreneurs build their firms around the values and principles that Corporate America has so cavalierly abandoned, then the new millennium will indeed be a successful and prosperous place for our community.

be better and richer and fuller and less pain-filled.

Management consultants do not often deal with the spiritual in order to fix the secular problems and issues we confront. But sometimes, and I think it increasingly so, it IS our values and principles which define our ability to achieve success and find fulfillment. The content of an entrepreneur's character is as much a part of competitive advantage as the money he has in the bank or the technology that drives her factory, and coming from a very rich and deep tradition of principles, values and ideals, black entrepreneurs should have especially strong advantages going into the next millennium. Let us not forget Who we are and Where we have come from, for this knowledge shall indeed make us free.

RIDIN' WITH MS. NIKKI

by Nikki Johnson, Consumer Advocate

Rating: 4=excellent 3=good 2=average 1=fair

Style (interior/color/etc.)	4
Gas mileage	4
Performance	4
Comfort	4
Equipment (tape/CD/etc.)	3
Price	4

The 1997 Oldsmobile Bravada is a genuine sport utility vehicle. This 4.3 liter rated at 190 horsepower, smooth electronically controlled four-speed automatic transmission and the new improved system four-wheel disc brakes. Speaking of brakes, the weather has been very bad here in the Bay Area as in most places. Well, the 4-wheel brakes definitely received there test today. When entering the freeway ramp there was a car that didn't understand the law of merging into traffic, so I was forced to apply pressure to the Bravada 4-wheel brakes. I must confess, they could stop on a dime!

As you check my rating chart above for this 1997 Bravada, it's score is almost perfect.

The Bravada is a great family car. I took some children to school and they loved it! Especially the storage area.

The sound system was nice, but lost a point because there wasn't a CD player in it so I'm not able to comment on it's sound. There are two very important items for me that a vehicle must have and that is where the coffee cupholder is placed and the music system. The Bravada had cup holders everywhere, even for the passengers in the back seat area. What a plus!

The tan leather interior complimented the green exterior color. A lovely combination.

With the bad condition of the weather across the country the Oldsmobile is quite happy to provide the prospects flooding into this segment with a Bravada that excels in tough conditions. The Bravada was entered in the 4, 750-mile Alcan Winter Rally where conditions were so adverse that the event had to be shortened by a few miles due to impossible road conditions. But in spite of 35 degrees below zero temperatures, thick fog and heavy snow, two Bravadas in the stock class came through with flying colors.

Until next issue, drive like you did when you tested for your license. Careful!

HERE'S GRANDMA:
A HOMOPHOBIC BLACK GRANDMA CALLS AMASSI FOR HELP PART 2

by

Cleo Manago

When we last left off with PART 1 two issues ago, after a long conversation in the parking lot, the teenager Stacey and I were heading back to AMASSI to meet Mary (his grandmother). Stacey had calmed down a little, but still appeared apprehensive to face her again. Contemplative, he walked behind me, very slowly, as we headed for the door. Concerned, I asked him how he felt about continuing our dialogue with his grandmother. He explained that he was tired of it, tired of the conflict, tired of being put down, of having no place else to go.

Stacey was apparently very traumatized. The lack of support for his way of loving, and the conflict with his grandmother seemed to have taken a toll on his spirit. As he spoke, I reflected on him mentioning that because he was too young for bars he went to Centinela Park to meet others like him. His clothing, at least on this day, was very seductive. I assumed he might be having sex in the park. I made a note to remember this and to intervene quickly on providing Stacey with HIV/AIDS risk-reduction support, and to hook him up for dialogue with peers to help reduce his risk for infection, or reinfection if already HIV positive.

Mindful of Stacey's anxiety, I suggested to him that during our session, if he felt particularly challenged or upset, to look up at me. This would be my cue to comfort him. He smiled and said, "OK."

"Listen," I said, "resolving this will take both you and your grandmother. Her opinions about your sexuality aren't necessarily the opinions of God (which I assumed were some of his worry), but her personal opinion. Stacey we all have points of view, few that come from within us. Many are influenced by unexamined traditions, assumptions and ideas inherited by societal circumstance. These traditions are created by people, not God. As a result of Black people's oppressive history in this country, judgmental
and homophobic thinking can be mistaken as common sense or God's will. But it's often a man and his biases that created these ideas."

Stacy responded with, "My grandmother tells me all the time that I'm a sinner and that I'm going to hell for being a punk!"

"Now listen. How well do you know your grandmother? Well a better question is; Do you think that she lives her whole life based on what she says "the Lord" expects?"

With a smirk, he says, "Hell, NO!"

"Well then. Yes, Mary is your grandmother, your guardian, your elder and deserves respect from you. You also deserve respect and to respect yourself. We all have a lot to learn. Your grandmother is doing the best she can with things as she sees them. That she is even willing to come to AMASSI and talk about this is a good sign. I think it's a sign, regardless of her complaints and opinions, of her love and concern for you. We should go in now and be considerate of her time too. Just hang in there and know
that today and maybe not just today your voice and opinions will count. OK?"

Smiling with relief, again , he says, "OK."

As we headed for AMASSI's front door Stacey walked behind me as if I was his shield. When we entered Mary was in the lobby gathering reading materials (including SBC in one hand). She looked up and said, "So you calmed him down, huh?" Watching Stacey prepare to roll his eyes I smiled at him then looked back to Mary.

"Yes. He's calm. We talked a little and I was finally able to find out more about Stacey and his concerns."

"His concerns! He has concerns?"

"Of course he does. Anyway, let's discuss everyone's concerns in my office."

Alarmed, Mary blurted, "Well I got to go!" I've been waiting here for almost an hour. I got things to do. I can't be around here all day."

"It shouldn't take all day, especially now that I have an understanding of both your points of view. Do you have an appointment you will be late for if we continue."

Stacey replies, "No she don't got no appointment anywhere. Come on Grandmama let's talk."

We were both stunned (at least I was, but Mary appeared to be too) when Stacey spoke up like he did. "You got time grandma. Ain't nothing else on your schedule today."

Mary says, "I'm not gonna be here all day..... How much longer will this take!?"

We all went back into my office. Once we began talking Mary was anxious to know what Stacey and I talked about outside. She seemed fascinated that Stacey even had concerns. It appeared that she was concerned that Stacey's "concerns " were critical of her, that he was too young and irresponsible to have concerns. I asked Stacey to explain to his grandmother how he felt. During his explanation he brought up how frustrated he was because he felt he didn't want to live with Mary any more and had no place else to go. Mary appeared angry in response to this and attempted to interrupt. I gently requested that she allow Stacey to express himself, that whatever he felt was indeed how he really felt and to please listen. She struggled to do so but finally did allow Stacey to continue. Stacey went on to mention that he felt bad when Mary called him a sinner, punk or sissy. He started to cry when mentioning that he hated coming home and would stay out all day waiting for her to leave so he wouldn't have to hear about what was "wrong" with him.

As if unable to take it anymore, Mary shouted. "And what is your part in this? You making it appear that I'm doing all of this horrible stuff to you. Who feeds you? Who gives you the money to buy those crazy clothes you have on? Who provides a roof over your head? Who? If you want to leave. That's fine. I am sick and tired of....."

Stacey seemed to withdraw under the questions and comments. He bowed his head,
appearing traumatized, while tears flowed down his face. As we agreed, I went over to comfort him, then asked Mary why she was so angry?

"He's ungrateful, I've given him everything..."

Mary became very defensive. She seemed to have difficulty hearing

Stacey. I asked her had she ever felt oppressed. We talked about oppression, sexism, and if she had ever felt oppressed as a woman, and if so, how did that make her feel.

"I'm Black. Am I? Of course I've felt oppressed."

"How about as a woman? Have you felt oppressed or mistreated by men because you are female?

After pausing Mary said, "Yes of course. That's why I ain't with no man now. "

"How did you feel while being oppressed or mistreated for being a woman?"

"What's your point? I know you ain't comparing being a woman to this mess, to being a homosexual?"

"I'm trying to get your understanding of oppression. I think I can get that understanding by learning about your relationship to oppression."

"All women have felt oppressed by men. But I ain't taking no stuff from no man."

"But you have felt oppressed by men for being a woman?"

"Yes I have!"

"Mary, my intent was never to get you to accept this "mess" as you call it. I think it can be difficult to accept something you really don't understand. So that's not my goal here. What I hope to do is to get you both to see how you contribute to the conflict between each other. Also I want you, Mary, to consider how you might be oppressing Stacey, as those men did who oppressed you. Oppression, judging Stacey and name-calling, words like sissy and fag will not make him change for the better. The best that can do is isolate him and or cause him to rebel. It also totally destroys the possibility for you to communicate and to really understand each other."

"I guess I was raised differently. I guess I'm old fashion. I just don't agree with this mess!!"

"What about the name calling?"

"Where I'm from that's what they call homosexuals"

"Have you ever been called a bitch Mary?" Cause where I'm from women are often referred to as bitches, and I still don't think it's right! Do you?

"You are comparing the wrong things, mister."

"I don't think so. I'm talking about name calling and how destructive it can be, particularly between relatives, or anybody. I only asked you the bitch question because you implied that you called Stacey names like punk because that's what they did to homosexuals where you come from. My point was that doesn't mean it's right, and as you can see, it hasn't helped you and Stacey one bit. Would you agree?

After a short pause Mary says, "You got a good point there."

"Stacey, I've heard you call your grandmother names too." What made you do that to your grandmother?"

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry." He's says crying.

"I believe you are sorry, but help us, help your grandmother to understand why you did it."

"Because I was frustrated and she never listens to me. It's always a fight. I need her. I have no where else to go. When she calls me names..... I just get to the point where I can't take it anymore. I'm sorry grandma."

"I apologize too, Stacey, for hurting you. I love you. I just don't understand this gay stuff."

They go to each other and embrace.

"Well Mary, if you want information and support on how to be more understanding of Stacey's way of loving we provide that type of support here at AMASSI. And Stacey, we have support here for you too. I'd like you both to come back and see me a few more times. Things don't change over night. Society can be a negative influence and could have you back at each other's throats. I already see some growth because you are listening to and respecting each other. This is good. But before you leave and make your next appointment I have a question for you both. What do you both need from each other to help you to get along better? Mary?

"Well..... I just need us to talk more. I need Stacey to be in the house at a decent hour and I still have concerns about how he dresses. I don't know if I'll ever accept that. I need him to respect me as his elder, his grandmother.

"That's very reasonable I think. Earlier when I mentioned that Stacey and I discussed his concerns outside, your response was "He has concerns?" as if you couldn't imagine he had them. He's sixteen, a very smart 16 with a life that's been difficult. He's a young Black man, who is attracted to other men intimately and romantically. How could he be all of this and not have concerns? It's apparent that you have concerns too, Mary. And you know what? You both have a right to your concerns. I think that if you both honored---I didn't say agreed with---but honored each others voice, things would be better between you two."

"You are right about the concern stuff. But because of today I do realize he's growing up and deserves some respect and consideration also. He has been through a lot for a child. That's what I know now. If anything else comes up, I'll let you know."

We all smile at each other.

"Stacey? What about you?"

He pauses, then giggles saying, "I don't know. I feel so much better. I don't want to mess things up. Uh.... I just don't want to be called fag anymore. I want to get along with my grandmother. She's all I got." He begins crying again. "I don't know what else to say. I'll try not to call her names anymore too. That's all I have to say for now."

"OK" I say. "You both have my number. Don't hesitate to call whenever you need to talk. Stacey, I would like to see you tomorrow to talk about something I think you'll find helpful. It has to do with health information about AIDS/HIV and getting you hooked up with people your age for your support. Mary, because he's under, 18 I need your consent. Do I have it?

"..... Yes"

"OK. My secretary has the paperwork. Also you can see him to make your appointments for next week, OK?

"OK, Cleo. I'm glad I came here. I have a lot to think about. Thank you. I'm very appreciative." says Mary.

"Me too, Cleo." responded Stacey. I can't believe this place is here." He's runs over and hugs me. "Thanks Cleo."

"You both are welcome. We are doing our job. That's our responsibility. Now you both go make your appointment for next week. And you, mister, I'll see you tomorrow."

Stacey and Mary did keep their appointments every week. At each session it was apparent that a positive bond was developing between them. After a few days Stacey toned down his seductive clothing. His pants weren't so tight and he changed his hair (that was my idea). He still stayed out too late on weekends for his grandmother's taste, but overall things had definitely changed for the better between them. Stacey found reasons to hang out at AMASSI almost everyday. Mary donated money to AMASSI and even brought me a plate of food, unsolicited, a few times.

The AMASSI Center is located in the Los Angeles area of Inglewood, a predominately African-American community. For more information and a brochure, call 310-419-1969. To visit AMASSI on the Internet the address is http://www.amassi.com or by e-mail AMASSICTR@aol.com. Cleo can be contacted at AMASSI or by e-mail at cleo@amassi.com.

Harambe

Cleo Manago
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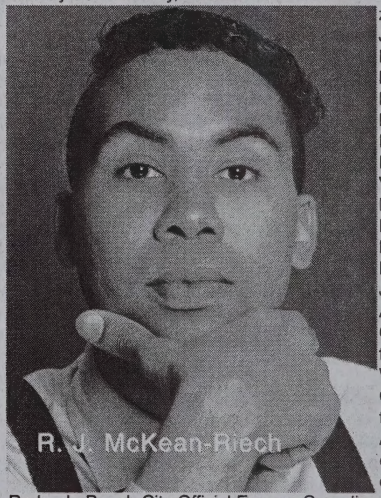
(continued from page 9)

A concerted effort, spearheaded by local African-American businessman, Barry Blackstone, in cooperation with the Cathedral City Chamber of Commerce and The Gay Tourism Guild, to create a diverse network inclusive of black gay and non-gay business owners, has been a major priority, thus resulting in the May weekend business conference.

One of the highlights of the events will be a round table discussion about the entrepreneurial challenges and opportunities facing the African American same-gender loving communities to be held Saturday, May 10, 1997 from 10 am to 3 pm. Confirmed speakers at press time are Donald L. Perry, Managing Partner of Pine Cobble Partners, a prominent Los Angeles financial consulting firm, Benetta Hairston, Publisher of Los Angeles3-based Neapolitan magazine, Stanley Bennett Clay, Publisher and Editor-In-Chief of SBC magazine, Stephen Johnson, Editor and Publisher of Oakland-based WHAZZUP! Magazine, R. J. McKean-Riech, Publisher of San Francisco-based Victory! magazine, Dawn Hayes, President of Dawn To Dusk Public Relations, New York novelist James Earl Hardy, AMASSI founder and CEO Cleo Manago, former Seattle Washington Councilwoman and first openly gay African American elected to public office, Sherry Harris, Redondo Beach City Official Eugene Cornelius Jr. and former Congressional Candidate Anita Rufus.



For further information on and registration for The Summit , which is also endorsed by Coachella Valley branch of the NAACP, contact William DeBardelaben in Los Angeles at 213.733.5661 ext. 2/ Fax: 213.733.733.9200, or Barry Blackstone in Palm Springs at 619.770.6053/ Fax: 619.864.1453. Or Write to The Summit/ 611 South Palm Canyon Drive Suite 7132/ Palm Springs, California.92264

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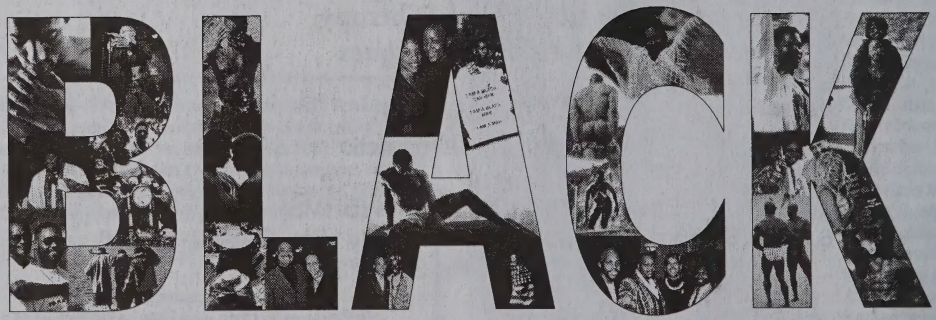

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THE SOUND OF ANN NESBY'S BLACKNESS

a David Shawn Hill interview

Her rich and passionate voice is an instrument of truth that powered the Grammy-winning, much acclaimed Africentric musical group "Sounds of Blackness". She is the sister-mother-daughter blackfolk know so well who, like Patti, will just as soon feed you black eyed peas, collared greens, hugs and kisses and admonitions on the same platter with her own deep dish sounds that are blackened beautifully by warm fires emanating from deep within her soul.

She's a solo act now, and her debut solo album, "I'm Here For You" once again proves that Ann Nesby's got the chops. And they ain't just pork. SBC Music Editor, David Shawn Hill, recently found that out , and much more, when he caught up with Mother Ann in New Orleans where she was, typically, hanging with family, and he'd be the first to tell you that a conversation with her is a conversation with your own black self. So he invites you to enjoy as much as he did.
---SBC

DAVID SHAWN HILL: What were you trying to say through your work with "Sounds of Blackness"?

ANN NESBY: One of the main goals was to encourage and enlighten and to educate through our form of music, singing the entire idiom of African American music, from an African American point of view, unapologetically. Our music is at the root of so many types of music. Almost all music uses some of those West African beats, and so many times our music has been taken and we've not been credited, like in the cases where people are being called 'The King of Rock & Roll', 'The King of Blues', and all that.

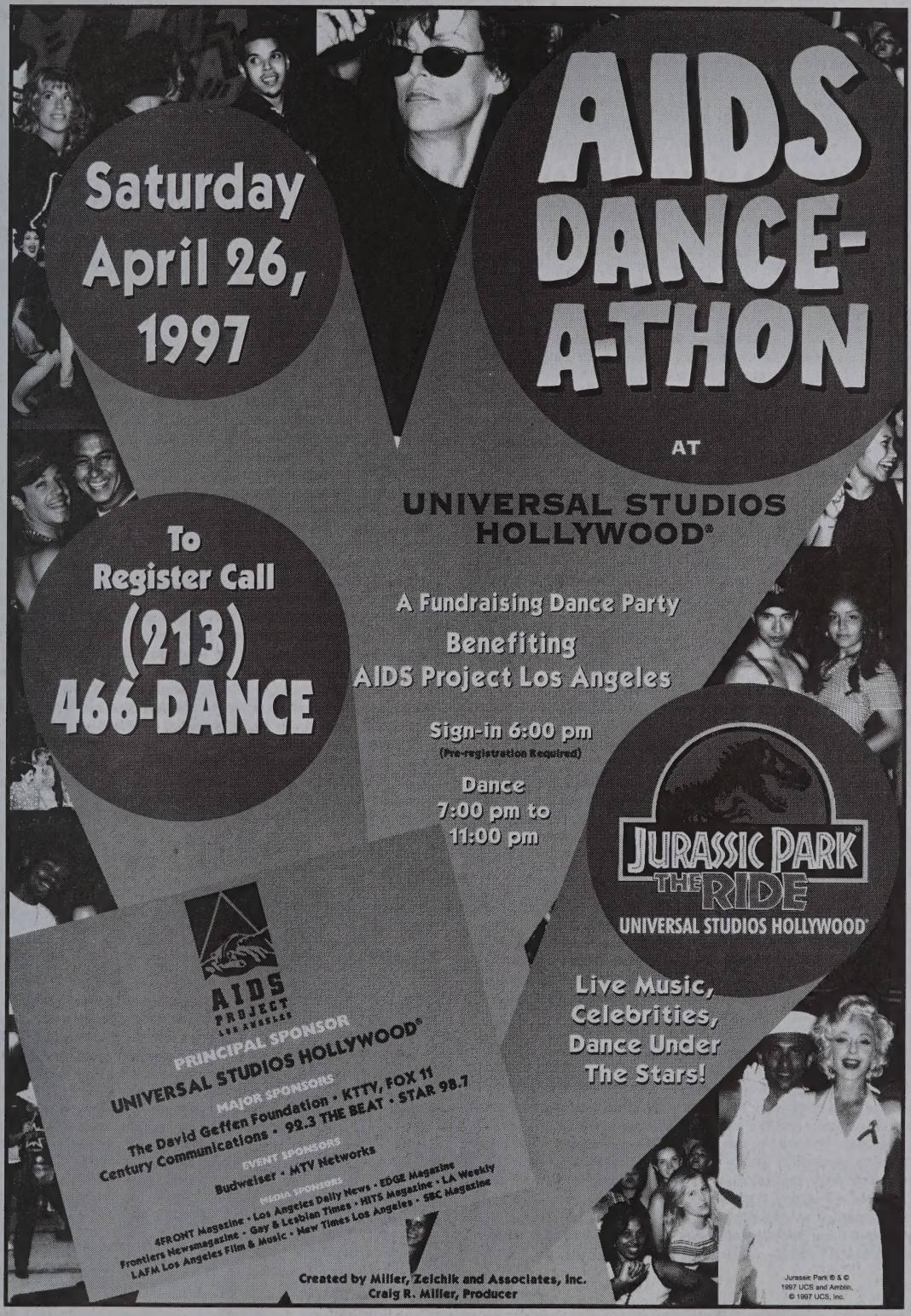
"Sounds of Blackness" was a group that stood for African American music. In fact, Gospel was a music that people really weren't respecting for what it's truly worth, and they weren't giving it it's rightful place in the world of art. The music is there to serve the community, so we do functions, go into the schools and clubs and gay bars and sing and teach about the richness of our heritage unapologetically.

I always say that Jesus was a man who went where there was a need because The Bible says: "Those that are whole need not a physician." So when people talk to you about, "How can you sing this kind of music, go into clubs and sing this music? How can you go into the gay clubs and sing?" I say 'because everybody needs to be encouraged. God looks on the heart and man looks on the outward appearance. Everybody needs to be encouraged. If a song can uplift your day, if a song can inspire you, what I'm suppose to do is use my God-given gift to sing and bring it to you.

On your new project, what was it like working with Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis?

They were a pleasure. First of all, they were first class human beings; real brothers who are concerned about their community and giving back to the community, and that, first and foremost, stood out in my mind.

When I got there, they were very encouraging, the atmosphere was always very relaxed and comfortable. They always encouraged the artist to write because they knew that writing would be the lifeline for an artist, and their children's children would be able to enjoy that money from writing for years to come. You see, so many times in years past, some of the pioneer artists were tricked out of that money, but with Jam and Lewis, having been on both sides of the fence as artists, producers and now owners of their own record company, they're able and willing and committed to educating young black artist and telling them how to go about establishing themselves in the business. So it was a great plus to be able to have them there as producers and to be able to ---well, they never said they were critiquing, but they would let the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artists express themselves freely, then they would say things like "Well, let me add this to it. I think it's wonderful, but let's add this thing here." And then they would tell you why they added it. And it makes you feel good because you know you're learning something from two of the top producers in the country.

And what they are actually adding affiliates with the words you've already written.

Absolutely.

As far as your solo career is concerned, it took awhile to finally get a solo album out. How long have you been considering this solo move?

Well when "Sounds of Blackness" signed its deal with Jam and Lewis I signed a solo deal. And with the success God has blessed "Sounds of Blackness" with , we were constantly trying to figure out when to do the Ann Nesby thing, but you know the old saying: "If it ain't broke don't fix it." So it was after "Sounds of Blackness" slowed down a bit, then Jam and Lewis decided to do the Ann Nesby thing.

You know, I'm originally from Detroit and I was at The State Theater last year, and that was the first time I saw "Sounds of Blackness" live. I believe it was a Terry Lewis-affiliated concert.

Oh yes! That was one of the first shows with that album.

Well I was mesmerized.

Oh Really!

Yeah. And you did a lot of solos at that concert.

You know how you do an album and you don't really know all the songs as well as you do as you go along? Well we were kind of feeling through things at that time, but I enjoyed it. I really enjoyed it, but I always enjoy Detroit because I know that Detroit is a town that appreciates music because they've produced such great musical talents.

Listening to your album, there's a definite gospel ring to a lot of the songs. What motivated that?

My motto is 'Always put God first and everything else will fall in line.' So when I began to pray about what I wanted to sing about---I never want to just sing about something that has no meaning and is not going to be encouraging or helpful---it came to me to do the album on relationships, so in writing about relationships I knew I had to touch on the emotional, the physical and the spiritual. We had to talk about unconditional love, talk about letting your word be your bond, talk about maintaining a relationship; man's relationship with his mate and man's relationship with platonic friends. And of course talk about the ultimate relationship which is man's relationship with God. So, there was no way that I could bridge that wide range just doing straight gospel because when you talk about man and his mate there's love involved in more ways than one. There's the heart-to-heart love and physical love and then the emotional. That's why I did songs like "I'll Do Anything For You" that represents unconditional love, and "If You Love Me Why Don't You Tell Me" which is about how to maintain relationships so that they don't go bad; how to tell your mate that you love them because so many times relationships fall apart

because people aren't always wise enough to tell their mate that they love them. They assume that they know. But something that minor can cause a relationship to fall apart.

And then there's the song "I'm Still Wearing Your Name" which is about the ultimate doom in relationships which is divorce. Children are affected, families are effected. Sometimes women, when they divorce, feel like life can't go on, so in my mind, I wanted to say, hey, just because you're divorce doesn't mean that your life isn't through. So many times people end up in divorce because people aren't with the mate that God has ordained for them, but , if you keep living, and pull yourself up and build your self-esteem, you can find somebody else and go on with your life.

As I listened to your lyrics what struck me was the conversational quality of them. They're very simple, yet, very bottom line deep. I can almost see the hand jesters and everything. They're very direct.

That was my hope, that people would get it.

Last week I had a party and I played your CD to get people's reaction, and I knew the reaction that I was going to get. There was a lot of 'Alright! Sing it, girl!'

Great! That's really great!

Tell me about the stage musical you were working with "Sing Hallelujah!"

"Sing Hallelujah!" was a gospel cabaret that consisted of 44 songs and there was choreography to every song. And yes, (laughing) I had to dance! When I was first called and asked to do it, I told them that I'd never danced before, but I told them that I'd try, and if God gives me the grace, I'll sure sing the hell out of 'em.

That must have been really interesting for you.

Oh yeah. It was the first theatre I'd done since school. We did that first show at the Playhouse-In-The-Round in Cincinnati and a

(continued on page 45)

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DAVE'S RHYTHM KITCHEN

by
David Shawn Hill, Music Editor

Aretha Franklin
The Early Years
(Columbia)

Aretha Franklin's most eclectic collection of bittersweet love songs recently found it's way back in record stores all over the world in this remastered compact disk.

In this classic collection, listeners have an opportunity to appreciate the lush,
sophisticated professionalism of her early 1960's recordings at Columbia, even though. critics and public alike dismissed this work as

derivative,overly orchestrated, and inappropriate to the young 24 year old singer's talent, obviously not realizing Ms. Aretha was not one to be pigeonholed. This vintage masterpiece proves that she was then and is today The Queen; O.K !!!!!!!!!!

"Drinking Again", a Dinah Washington cover, dominates the album with blazing vocals, desperate lyrics, and Ms. thing yodeling like she's right in the First
Ebenezar Baptist Church of Nutbush, Tennessee!!!!!!! "I ain't got nothin but a bottle of
Seagrams Gin and just a memory" concludes the song with more power than the famous Chattanooga Choo Choo."This Bitter Earth" , the CD's first single and another Dinah Washington, slowly brings anyone with a heart to tears as Aretha May (that's what her friends call her) spills her guts on her prophetically bitter love life.

The Early Years also contains three excellent examples of Franklin's trip into classic R&b. Her cover of "Walk On By" displays a lighter, cooler and less melodramatic delivery than Dionne Warwick's original, but does explode at the end.

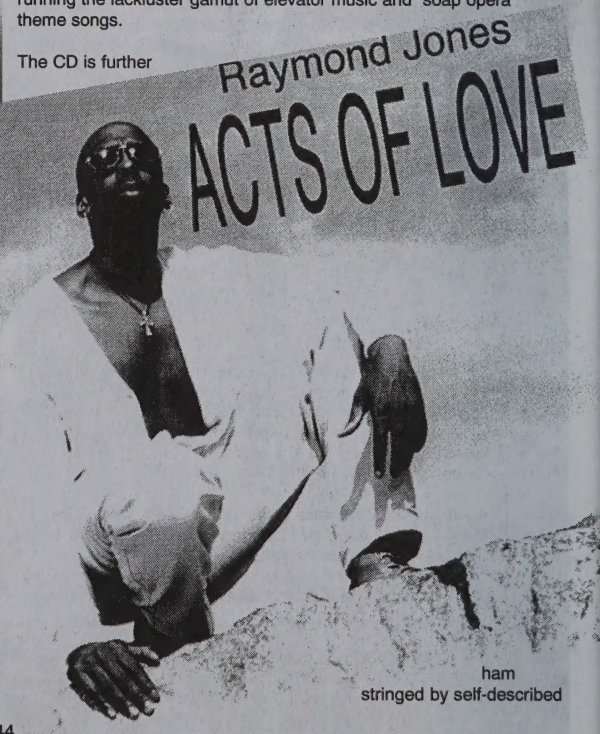
A more socially conscious Aretha sings to save the world on her version of "Take A Look", and delivers "Nobody Knows How I Feel This Morning" with a bluesy flare.

This may not be the Aretha most people know, but with this classic display of song and someone so young who could sing such angry,sad love with such
conviction is amazing to the ear!!*****

Raymond Jones
Acts of Love
(UEG)

Raymond Jones, who, as a composer, augmented Spike Lee films with such songs as "Harlem Blues" ("Mo Better Blues"), "People In Search of A New Life" ("Clockers") and "Be Alone Tonight ("School Daze") has nobly put together a collage of songs designed to explore the positive vibes of love. Given his stellar track record and the lovely title "Acts Of Love" , our expectations are high, however, what we are given are lyrics that are down right weak and musical arrangements running the lackluster gamut of elevator music and soap opera theme songs.

The CD is further

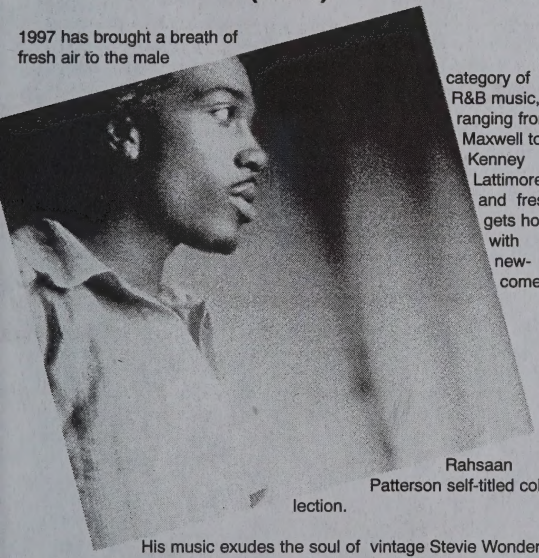


ham
stringed by self-described

poetry that has little to do with poetry and more to do with high school love notes. Now don't get me wrong , some songs do rise above the muck and mire of the mundane, thanks to some occasional soaring vocals by Portia Griffen ("She Ain't Gonna Leave You") and the isolated rhythmic appeal of Michael Alford's arrangements on "Give Up The Love".

Yes, Raymond Jones searches for love through an array of songs but runs into potholes with repetitive beats, awkward rap inserts and those damn poems! It just ain't happening.**

Rasheen Patterson
Rasheen Patterson
(MCA)



1997 has brought a breath of fresh air to the male category of R&B music, ranging from Maxwell to Kenney Lattimore, and fresh gets hot with newcomer Rahsaan Patterson self-titled collection.

His music exudes the soul of vintage Stevie Wonder and Chaka Khan, his obvious vocal influences, and blends it with a modern day sensibility. From "Stop By" to "Come Over", the music flows like a gentle brook, and the live percussions, jazzy strings and the violin arrangement on "Spend The Night", gives his music natural, deep rooted romantic soul.

Vocally, Patterson erupts with each and every single, displaying that a male recording artist has the same liberation a female diva has without moaning and growling like a damn grizzly bear.

Another must hear-song, "Can We Wait A Minute", has a violin arrangement that will soften the hardest heart.

A singer who possesses a voice that is both poetic and powerful, and who is man enough to get into with his sensitive female side, Rahsaan Patterson is worthy of keeping both an eye and an ear on. ****

(Ann Nesby continued from page)

scout came in, saw the play, and took it to off-Broadway. So we ended up at the famous Village Gate Theater in New York for about 6 months. That's the theater where all of the greats like Clara Ward performed. So it's like if you make it through the Village Gate then you've done something. So I was very proud of that. And then, after that came "Sounds of Blackness". I had been a part of the James Cleveland Gospel Music Workshop prior to doing theatre, and that's how I met Donald Lawrence, the director of "Sing Hallelujah". The Gospel Music Workshop is a great platform for starting artist because it allows them to show their abilities, and for others to hear them and use them in other things.

Back to your album. From what I could tell, the title track, "I'm Here For You" , was very personal, written for someone you know.

Unconditional love is when you love regardless. Because The Bible says that loves covers a multitude of sins. You know their faults and you're willing to step in and be their friend when they're weak. In my case, this song was for a friend who was diagnosed with AIDS. You know, a lot of times people are ignorant on how to work with people who have AIDS, and they're afraid, they don't know what to do, they're afraid of contracting---so, in essence, they walk away from them and leave them there lonely. A lot of people have passed on because of the loneliness and the broken heart faster than they would have normally had there been somebody who loved them and stood by them. And I did not want that to be my case [with my friend] because I searched myself and knew that my love for him was unconditional then, and it is now. He's got whatever he needs from me. That's what that song is about, not having to worry about whether I was going to be there, just knowing that I will always be right there by his side---whatever he needs, whatever I can do. "I'm Here For You" is one of my favorite songs. And what we've decided to do is donate a portion of the proceeds from that single to the Minority AIDS Foundation.

I also noticed on the album that there were a few up tempo, 'housey' kind of tunes, particularly "Hold on" which I've been hearing in the clubs.

Yes! Yes! That's the new single! "Can I Get A Witness" and "This Weekend" are going to be released as singles too.

And those are going to really be pushed hard on the club scene. Now do you actually perform in dance clubs?

Oh yes! Actually I did all the Club performances for "Sounds of Blackness" including L.A.'s Catch One.

So what's next for you Ann Nesby?

There's a possibility that I might do some theatre again. I've had several offers to do shows like "Smokey Joe's Cafe'", but I've been on the road so much I haven't had a chance to do much of anything else right now, but I'm sure there'll come a time when the album is not being played and I'll be in the studio working on the new one, that I'll be able to do some more theatre in between. Because you know the story about starving artist. It's either feast or famine. So I'm sure I'll be doing something that I love to pay the bills.

FLESH & FANTASY

fiction by Vernon Clay

The first time I saw Pearson was in a photograph of a friend's party. He wasn't the initial center of the photo; my friends David and Mark were, smiling a drunk grin with Styrofoam cups filled with rum & coke in their hands. But there was Pearson, standing in the background, talking to some useless queen with her run-of-the-mill hazel eyes on. I say she was useless because he wasn't talking to me.

I don't really know if his name was Pearson, but for some reason I call him that because it sounds like such a soap opera name, like Maverick or Trevor or Brandon. The truth is I've never met Pearson, but that was soon to change. Very soon indeed.

Our lives crossed with that photo. He was a brown skinned man, very strong jaws, a cleft in his stubble covered chin, and dimples to die for. That photo revealed a man of great sexuality as well as sensuality. He had thick lips, soft and inviting. He had broad shoulders and a powerful chest that demanded to be seen in the black spandex top he'd worn, with nipples that stood at attention. I fell in love with that photo, running my fingers across the slick surface, imagining the flesh against mine. Yes, he was that captivating, that seductive, that fyne!

Our paths crossed again, this time across the crowded dance floor of the Catch One Disco. The music seemed to stop as I noticed him walking across the floor dressed in tight jeans that did little for the imagination, with his pronounced package out front and a round rear that demanded attention. I wanted to talk to him, but was deathly afraid of rejection. What if he didn't like me? What if he liked tall men like himself, rising to a height of at least six-foot three? I was out of the league at a stupefying five-foot seven. There were too many what-ifs, so I just admired him from afar.

I watched him dance, the muscles in his legs popping forth with erotic overtures. He wore a midriff T-shirt, and all his stomach muscles pressed forward from behind his tight flesh to produce a six-pack Coors would be proud of. His skin was smooth, the tiniest hint of hair coming from his sternum which was encased by a pair of mighty pecs. Even his hands stood out, with their map of robust veins that swelled across the back; manly hands they were.

I often thought of Pearson as I lay up at nights listening to Leno's monologue of the day, visualizing what I may have in the refrigerator to snack on. I would imagine us at a swank party, ties & tails, picking at the hors d'oeuvres trailing by us on trays of silver carried by men of gold. He would talk to me, his tone very strong, very baritone, smiling at me with teeth of perfectionary whiteness. I would just stare into his pupils, transfixed by his intelligent conversation and snappy wit. He is captivated by me, his appeal of shorter men fulfilled by yours truly. We undress each other with our eyes. I, seeing him in all his fleshly wonder. The roundness of his chest, the width of his shoulders, the thickness of his thighs, the thinness of his waist. I take it all in like a cool drink of lemonade. He is the one, girlfriend, from follicle to cuticle.

Many times, as I stand in the tub, water cascading across my smooth flesh, trickling tiny drops from my appendages, I think of Pearson. I can feel him standing behind me, chest against back, knee against thigh, manhood against tush. He wraps his arms around me, pressing me unto his body, encasing me like a caterpillar's cocoon in his carnal embrace. He begins to make love to me, as if we were long time lovers reunited again. It's slow at first, very sensual, very exciting and passion-filled. I can feel the intertwining of pain and pleasure, love and lust, flesh and fantasy. He is a god, spilling words of lecherous delight into my ear like wine from a pitcher. Then I explode into a river of lust, each globule twisting within the water, falling into the drain, my ecstasy spent.

Soon imagination met reality, and Pearson and I were to actually meet. The backdrop; the cruisy surroundings of a local park that shall remain nameless. It was late, and the vultures were out in droves on this Saturday night. My eye caught many a man that evening, their look intense enough to burn a hole through my loins. Shadowed faces with drunken smiles and eager lips. The sounds of heavy breathing and ruffling clothes beneath dimmed lamp lights. The voyeur in me enjoys this place. To see the sight of men engaging in the "quickie" always excited me. There was the sense of no shame, and fast eroticism that came with the meeting of each couple. Filled mouths and willing buns, rushing in a frenzy of groping hands and a blur of introductions to reach a sensation that only lasted a second. A fool's paradise it was.

This is where I saw Pearson, leaning back on a park bench, the amber glow of a cigarette fixed limply between his fingers. I caught his eye before he caught mine. "Pssst!" he exclaimed, grabbing my attention. I glanced in his direction casually before actually seeing who he was. When I did recognize him, my heart felt as though it had shot into my throat and I found it so hard to breathe.

Thump! Thump! Thump! My ears echoed to the sound. He grinned at me, the look strained, as if his mouth were performing a task his brain was unaware of. He beckoned me again, and I found my feet suddenly weighed a ton. He was looking fine as ever, as my eyes adjusted to the image.. He wore a tank-top and shorts, the latter hugging his thighs like a leach to

a vein. His thick tool seemed to grow steadily against his leg, threatening to go beyond the boundaries of his shorts. I felt as if I were going to faint.

I slid beside him on the bench, and his grin widened, emitting a sting of alcohol that was so strong that I had to hold my nose shut. It didn't matter because I was hypnotized by his incredible stare which placed me in a quickening trance. He eased closer to me, placing a hand on my thigh. Then he spoke, "Hey, how you doing?"

"Fine," I replied, unable to say more.

"What's your name?" he asked, squeezing my thigh, smiling again.

Something was wrong. I wasn't sure, but I said, "William," and just as I said it, it came to me; his voice! It was different today somehow, a little lower, a bit high.

"William," he repeated, "I like that. My name is Cleavis."

What! I thought. It wasn't Pearson. What happened to Pearson?

Just then Pearson...or is it Cleavis. Like Beavis! Began to nod his head, as if approving of something. "Nice strong thighs," he said, his lips poking forward and his eyes batting. It hinged on the side of feminine. What the hell was going on? I questioned, wondering what had happened to the man I had been with only minutes ago.

I stood to my feet, looking down at this impostor, not believing my eyes, not believing my nose. Invasion of the Body Snatcher was happening right in this very park.

Before I knew it I was trailing back to my car, revving the engine and streaming along the street, my mind in a frenzy. As soon as I reached the confines of my bedroom I sat back and waited until my breathing returned to a civil pace. Cleavis had become the flesh and Pearson was the fantasy. I closed my eyes and slowly undid my zipper. I placed my hand within the warmness of my pouch, soothing my throbbing stiffness. I thought once more of Pearson, his thickness, his deep voice, his manly demeanor, his warm embrace. Cleavis. Who was he if not a stranger? Tonight I would make love to my fantasies.

Tonight I would make love to Pearson.

model: T. Jackson Washington DC

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"HOLDING ON TO TEAR DROPS IN THE MOUTH OF THE NIGHT" is a collection of short stories that are the voices of mothers, lovers, homeboys and Puerto Rican boys with good hair. The characters have all been taken by AIDS. The stories include "Hoopin' Wid Da Fellas On The Down Low", "Let Me Check Your Blood Report Motherfucker" and "No, No, No, Girlfriend He Was Jesus". To order send $10.00 to Henry Hardee/ A Black Boy's Dream/ 2167 W. Bowler/ Chicago IL 60612.

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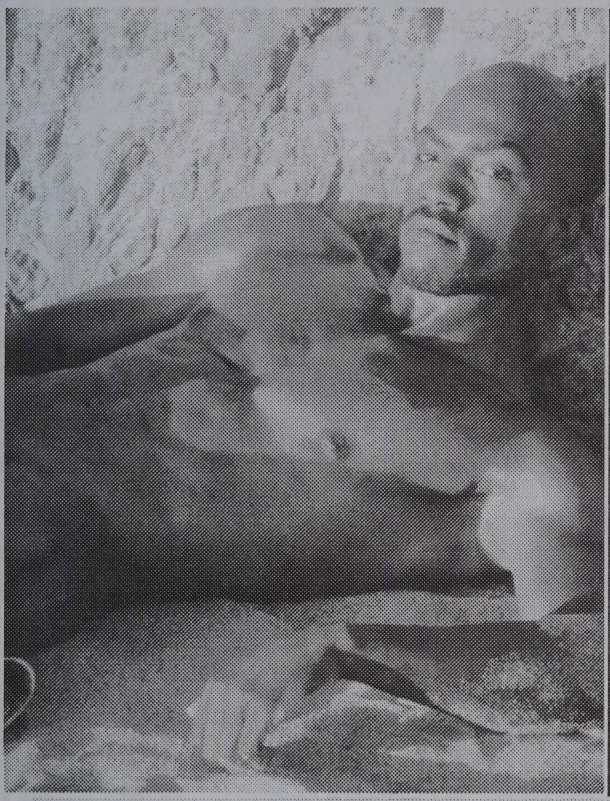

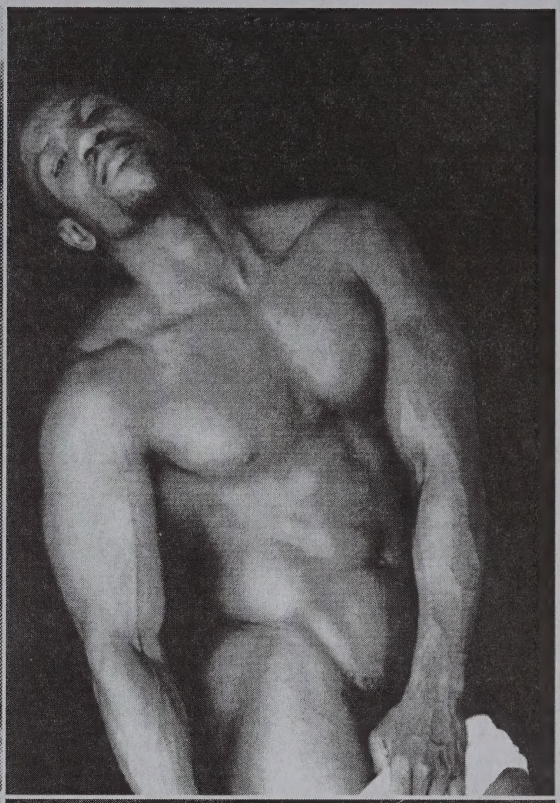

Spirit of BLACK men

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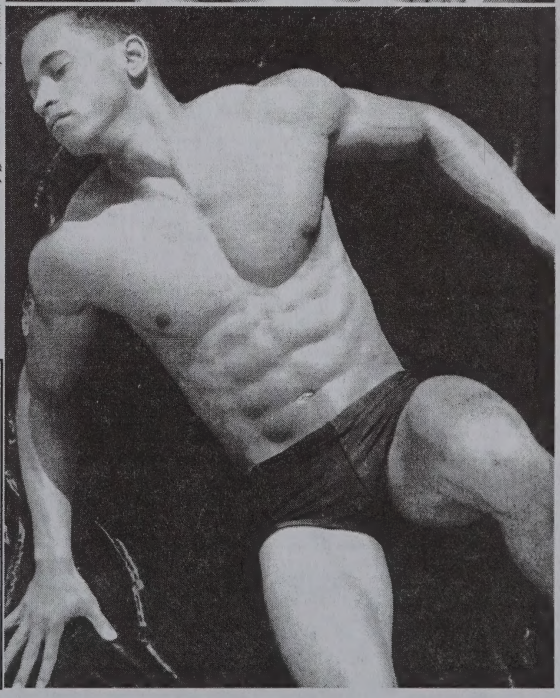

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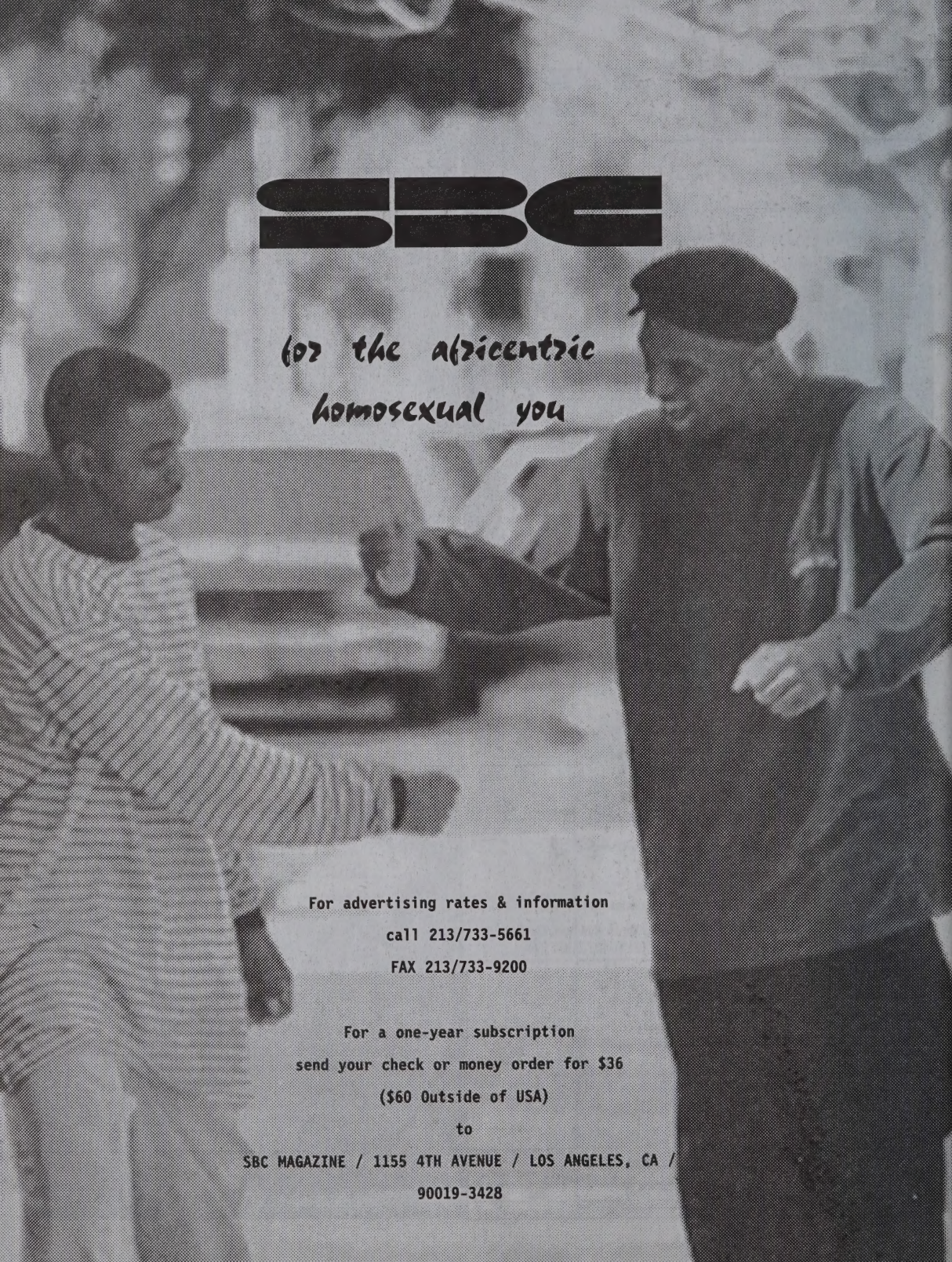

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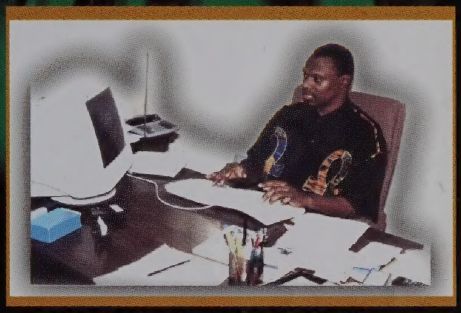

AMASSI's Founder and C.E.O., Cleo Manago

Founding Message

At AMASSI we believe that self-love and cultural affirmation go hand-in-hand with creating the climate necessary to encourage reducing one's risk for life threatening matters, and proactively living a healthy life. AMASSI takes a unique, culturally affirming and holistic approach to empowerment, care, intervention and prevention. The *AMASSI Posse* acknowledges and affirms sexual, social and lifestyle differences, providing non-judgmental support and information to all seeking confidential assistance and tools toward a healthier life, positive self image and satisfying relationships.

An issue of particular concern at AMASSI, is the growing spread of HIV/AIDS in our community. Almost 15 years into the AIDS epidemic, new cases among African-Americans and Latinos are still on the rise. Most have heard about HIV, abstinence and the use of condoms. Still many, distracted with interpersonal and societal conflicts, and peer pressures, are not consistently addressing the HIV threat in their lives.

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Cleo Manago

Contacting AMASSI

AMASSI is open Monday through Friday (and some Saturdays). For the convenience of our clients, who work, are looking for work or attend school, we provide morning, afternoon and evening, services (9 a.m. to 9 p. m.).

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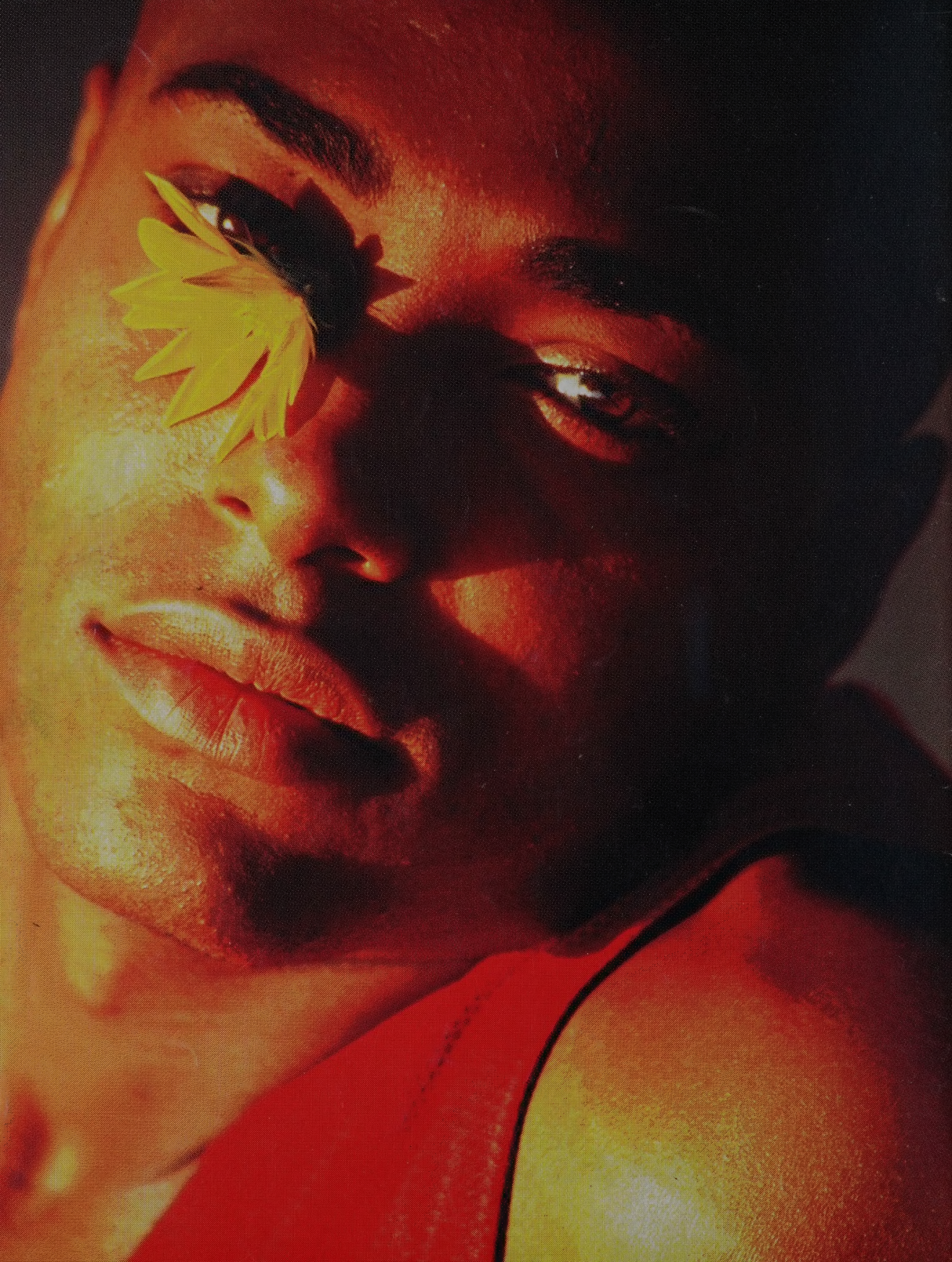

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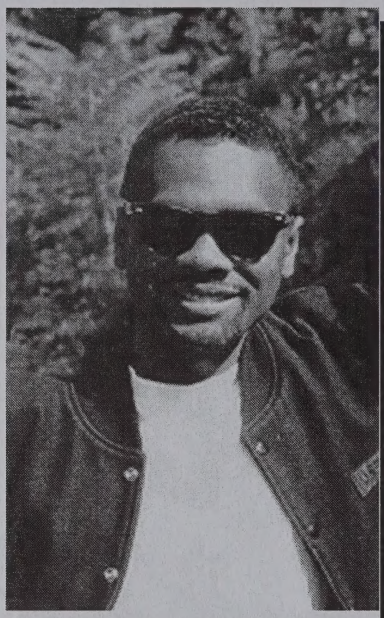

Sometimes bitter lessons are hard to take but take them we must if we are to survive.

The escalating racism in America has been more than aided and abetted by the apathy of African America. A false comfort zone of token gains has dangerously insulated us against reality. There are those among us who truly believe that we have reached a level of equal opportunity in this country and therefore there is no need to equalize the slanted playing field. There are those among us who say that they are sick and tired of drudging up the ugly memories of the past and want to view their world only in terms of the future.

Sometimes bitter lessons are hard to take.

John Singleton's new film Rosewood is one of those lessons. A reminder. A warning. A LaTasha Harlins murder. A Rodney King beating. A White Supremacist bombing.

Sometimes the harsh light of day must be looked upon. Because it's easier to get kicked in the ass when your head is stuck in the ground.

anything's possible
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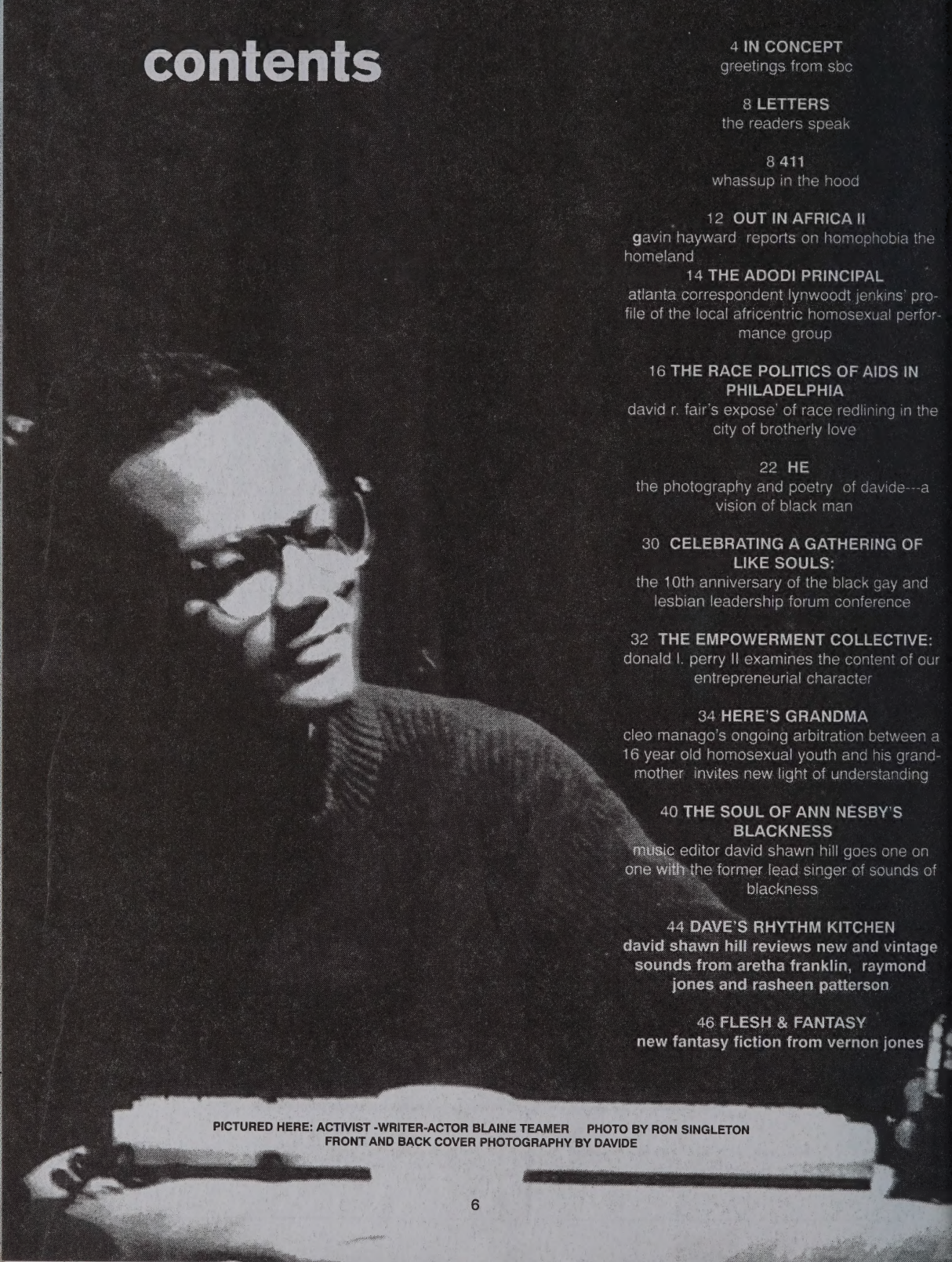

PICTURED HERE: ACTIVIST -WRITER-ACTOR BLAINE TEAMER PHOTO BY RON SINGLETON
FRONT AND BACK COVER PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVIDE

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I got the new mag yesterday. I just wanted to let you guys know that I think you are doing a great job! You should be proud of your accomplishments. SBC is letting the world know that we (the Afrocentric homosexual community) are significant movers and shakers, that we are a community that truly has something of value to offer the world and to ourselves. SBC continue to be a prime example and a vehicle of encouragement to Black Gay publishers and people everywhere. If no one has taken the time out to let you know that, I am doing it now.

Stanley, you and your team are proof that persistence, time and faith pays off. Keep it up! SBC. You helped to make me proud to say, "I am a Black Homosexual."

With Love and Respect,

Stephen Johnson
Publisher
Whazzup! Magazine
Oakland, California

I write because each new issue of SBC continues to be an inspiration!

The November '96 issue was, in a word, "excellent". The format and photos in the "411" section were great. The interview with James Earl Hardy had real intellectual substance and for me "The Marriage of Carlos and Wayne" was as beautiful a piece as I've recently read. You, Stanley, really captured the love these two men have for each other.

Then the December '96 issue arrives with a new color cover format and a real attempt to give voice to the National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum and Black Men's Xchange points of view. In addition, the photographs by Greg McNeal were enough to make every black man even surer of his individual beauty. Wow! I also enjoyed the obvious character and finesse exemplified in Gregory Travis' review of the Jocelyn Elders book Sharecropper's Daughter to Surgeon General.

Stanley, if you ever wonder if it's worth it or if your audience is listening, the answer is yes (twice). Thank you for producing an excellent publication for the wonderful black men and women who love to see and read about ourselves in your magazine.

Kudos

Kenneth E. Reeves
City Councillor
Cambridge, Massachusetts

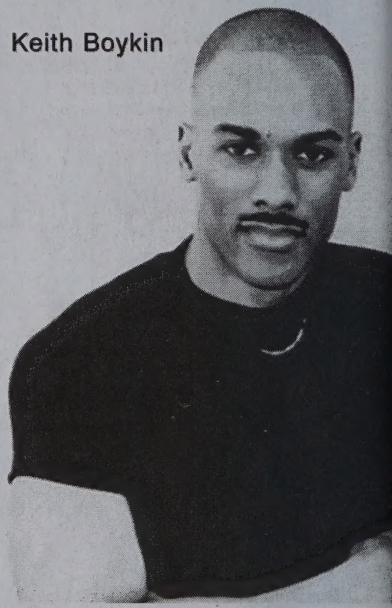
We gladly welcome your comments and letters. When writing, faxing or e-mailing us please include your telephone number which will not be printed, but is needed for verification only. It is not the policy of SBC to print unverifiable, unsigned or anonymous letters. Some letter may be edited for the purpose of space and/or clarity. Mail your letters to The Editor/ SBC magazine/1155 4th Avenue/ Los Angeles, California 90019. Fax us at 213.733.9200 or e-mail us at sbc@netwkcal.com.

The 411

BLACK GAYS AND LESBIANS CHALLENGE CHRISTIAN COALITION TO TAKE REAL STEPS FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Washington DC---On February 4, 1997, the leaders of a national black lesbian and gay organization responded cautiously to elements of a newly announced plan by a right-wing religious group and called on the group to take honest, constructive steps to heal the wounds of division that they have created.

Keith Boykin, Executive Director of the National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum, said the recent announcement of the Christian Coalition's Samaritan Project is only a "first step" in reconciling the religious right's history of indifference toward blacks, the poor and the inner cities. The Samaritan Project includes an 8-point plan for strong families, safe neighborhoods, charitable giving, racial justice, and revitalizing the church.


Keith Boykin

Despite the plan's positive rhetoric, Boykin cautioned that the black community and the gay community still have much reason to be skeptical and quoted the Matthew 7:15-16 warning from Jesus Christ: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits."

Boykin said that the Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum would be closely watching the fruits of the Christian Coalition to see that their deeds match their words. The Forum took up the issue of the religious right in the black community at its Tenth Annual National Conference held in Long Beach, California, February 13-17, 1997. Boykin also announced that the Forum will distribute to churches nationwide copies of a new award-winning documentary film called "All God's Children," which responds to the role of the religious right in the black church.

In a February 4 letter to Christian Coalition director Ralph Read, Boykin encouraged Reed's organization to take four specific steps to achieve social and economic justice.

First, he asked that Ralph Reed meet with members of the black lesbian and gay community to discuss how we can overcome the barriers that have excluded our cooperation.

Second, he called for the Christian Coalition to expand the scope of its "Racial Justice" campaign to include Social Justice for all people, including lesbians and gays. "The Christian Coalition should support the Employment Non Discrimination Act, which outlaws employment discrimination based on sexual orientation," Boykin said.

Third, Boykin and the Forum called for an end to the Christian Coalition's inflammatory anti-gay rhetoric. "If they really want to help communities, they first need to stop the hateful rhetoric that has kept people divided against one other," said Mandy Carter, who since 1994 has led the Leadership Forum's "Call to Resist" campaign.

Fourth, the Forum urged the Christian Coalition to renounce the elements of its Samaritan Plan that will cause further economic injustice, including the call for passage of a balanced budget amendment, which will require decidedly unchristian cuts in services to women, children, and the poor. In addition, the plan would restore the "gag rule" on family doctors and deny access to family planning services for poor women, women in the military, and women living overseas. It would also de-fund the National Endowment for the Arts and the Legal Services Corporation for the poor.

The Samaritan Project bills itself as "a bold and compassionate plan to combat poverty and restore hope." However, "there's nothing bold or compassionate about balancing the budget on the backs of the poor," Boykin said. "What kind of good Samaritan would abandon the role of government in helping the needy?" he asked.

Boykin called on the religious right to embrace new challenges, including preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS, the leading cause of death for African-Americans between the ages of 25 and 44. "I want to see the Christian Coalition fighting for Medicaid funding and health care for the 37 million uninsured Americans," he said. "How are we going to provide jobs and training for people who are kicked off the welfare rolls and onto the streets? These are the questions we need to answer."

The National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum is the only national organization dedicated to the nation's two and a half million African-American gays and lesbians. Established in 1988, the Forum works to empower black lesbians and gays by developing their leadership skills, increasing their visibility, and building bridges between their various communities.

STAMP OUT AIDS! AND FRIENDS OF LEIMERT PARK PLAN TRIBUTE TO STRICKEN "GOOD TIMES" STAR RALPH CARTER

Los Angeles, Ca--- Stamp Out AIDS!, the community-based, non-profit organization of 10,000 postal workers and Friends of Leimert Park Fine Art Gallery, are putting together a special tribute to "Good Times" star Ralph Carter who has been stricken with the AIDS virus. The actor, known to millions of Americans as "Michael" from the long-running 70's sitcom, became a household name and symbol of intelligence and black consciousness for young people and adults alike.

The Ralph Carter Tribute, which is hosted by Gill's Barrel Catering and features a video get well card recording, is part of a day long program to be held Sunday, March 16, 1997 between 12 noon and 6 pm at the Leimert Park Fine Art Gallery, 3351 West 43rd Street, Los Angeles, California. The Leimert Park Fine Art Gallery is located in the largest concentrated area of black owned businesses in the United States.

March being Women's Month, a special women's art exhibit and book signing will be held from 3 pm to 6 pm in honor of women overcome by the AIDS virus.

The entire day's event is free to the public.

For further information please contact the Friends of Leimert Part Fine Art Gallery Volunteer Project Coordinator, Elwin Ruthledge at 213.299.0319.

UFMCC AND PLANTETOUT ANNOUNCE JOINT PLANS IN CYBERSPACE

Los Angeles, CA---The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC), the world's largest Lesbian/Gay Christian denomination, and PlanetOut (PNO). an " online virtual community" on America On Line (AOL) and the world-wide web, have reach an agreement on plans for joint efforts in cyberspace.

The agreement was finalized at the UFMCC Technology Summit held in the newly purchased $3.8 million UFMCC World Center Building in West Hollywood, CA. The Technology Summit (the first for the fast-growing denomination), was convened by the Reverend Elder Troy Perry, UFMCC's founder and moderator, and included members from throughout the Fellowship with expertise in a wide variety of communication and information technologies.

Tom Rielly, President and CEO of PLANETOUT, was the featured speaker at the event.

According to Perry, "UFMCC, with 300 congregations in 19 countries, has already established itself as a major lesbian.gay presence in cyberspace. The denomination maintains a 115 page website (hht://www.ufmcc.com) with live links to over 65 local MCC webpages, many regional/district websites, and E-mail directories for our member congregations around the globe.

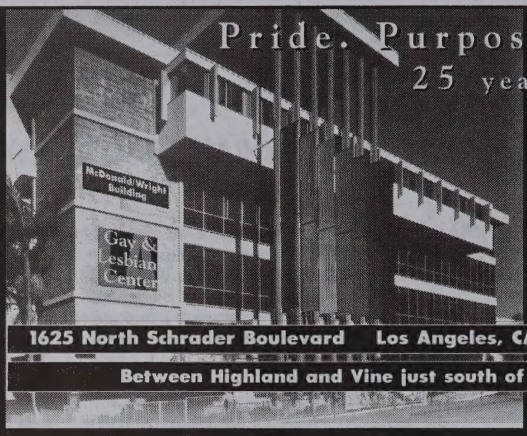
"Our plans for the future include a world-class Communications Center in our new building complex, utilizing the best in existing and emerging technologies to build, strengthen and equip local congregations," Perry added. "Establishing a presence on PlanetOut, both on AOL and the worldwide web, is an important component of our online strategy for UFMCC as we become the "Church for the 21st Century!"

AFRICAN-AMERICAN GAY AND LESBIAN EMPOWERMENT SUMMIT DESCENDS UPON PALM SPRINGS MAY 9-11

Palm Springs, California---Hundreds of African-American gay and lesbian entrepreneurs, business owners and financial consultants will network with gay and non-gay business persons from across the country in the 1st annual African-American Gay and Lesbian Empowerment Summit to be held May 9-11 at the Desert Oasis Estate in Palm Springs, California. Palm Springs, which boasts one of the largest, most diverse and affluent gay communities in the country, along with Cathedral City and other communities of the Coachella Valley, are becoming the destination of choice for many African-American gays and lesbians, many of which are starting businesses and laying down roots in the area.

(continued on page 36)

Gay & Lesbian Center



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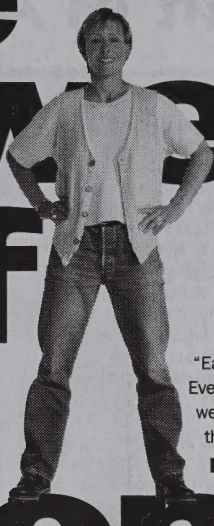

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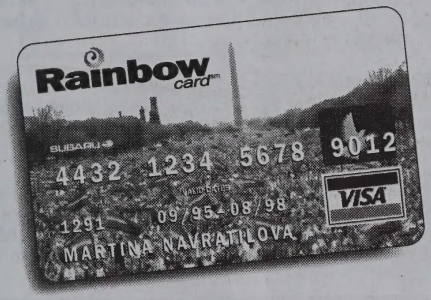

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Photo: Peter Lien

Out In Africa: 11

by Gavin Hayward

Updates In Namibia

Early in December last year, President Sam Nujoma of Namibia, in an address made to the third Swapo Women's Council congress in Gobabis, called for the uprooting of homosexuality from Namibian society. In statements reminiscent of Mugabe's homophobia in Zimbabwe, Nujoma, and a subsequent statement from SWAPO supporting his position, labeled homosexuality as unAfrican and a European import.

His words are reported to have been: "All necessary stops must be taken to combat all influences that are influencing us and our children in a negative way. Homosexuals must be condemned and rejected in our society."

Soon after his statement, the Namibian gay rights organization, The Rainbow Project, said it wanted to meet the Head of State to clear up misconceptions regarding the sexual orientation of gays and lesbians in Namibia, of which they said they "are proud and not prepared to apologize for."

Gay activists in Namibia were aghast at the turn of events, as in 1990, following discussions with members of the gay community, Prime Minister Hage Geingob assured homosexuals of their rights in terms of Article 10.2 of the country's constitution. Ironically, in 1980 Nujoma received an award from the gay community of San Francisco in recognition of his struggle against discrimination.

There is speculation that aid to Namibia from Scandinavian countries could be cut considerably as it is linked to the human rights records of the recipient country.

The National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality in South Africa has issued a statement expressing serious concern about these developments in a neighboring state, and strong support for the Namibian gay and lesbian community against arbitrary attack and prejudice., They labeled SWAPO's call for action as misguided, "particularly from a liberation movement...which has always fought for equality and justice for all". They added that allegations that homosexuality is foreign to Africa are factually incorrect and inflammatory, saying that it is discrimination that is unAfrican, not homosexuality.

The threat to the gay and lesbian community in Namibia seems to have been the spur to get them organized. They have set up working groups on gay rights, cultural activities, and counseling and AIDS-assistance. They are organizing Safer Sex workshops, the free supply of condoms and a Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. They can be contacted at the e-mail address: sister@grumpy.net.na or call (0926461) 250066.

FORMER PRESIDENT OF HOMOPHOBIC ZIMBABWE OUTED.

Zimbabwean police have instituted investigations into sodomy allegations against former president Professor Canaan Banana after one of his ex-aids-de-camp said in evidence under oath that he suffered from stress after being raped and sexually abused by Banana for several years.

Former police inspector Jefta Dube made these allegations as part of his defense in a case in which he was convicted of the murder of a former police constable. Dube shot his former colleague, Patrick Mashiri, on 24 September 1995 at Gwanzura Stadium after Mashiri had called him "Banana's wife".

Dube's defense was that on that particular night when he committed the offense, he was under the influence of drugs and alcohol and these constituted special circumstances. Dube denied any intention to kill and asserted the victim had insulted him while they were relieving themselves.

Dube claimed that his excessive intake of alcohol and mbanje (marijuana) was because he was haunted by the alleged forced homosexual activity with Professor Banana, which included being sodomized while drunk.

Two psychiatrists testified that Dube suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. On 25 February Justice Bartlett sentenced Dube to ten years imprisonment in the Harare High Court, and recommended that a full criminal investigation be instituted through the Attorney General's office to establish the veracity of Dube's claims of sexual abuse at State House between 1983 and 1986.

Reports from Harare indicate that gays and lesbians in Zimbabwe are celebrating after these revelations which once again debunk the myth that homosexuality is unAfrican as claimed by current president Robert Mugabe.

[Gavin Hayward is the Editor of Exit, a Southern African monthly newspaper published in Kensington. For more information about Exit, you may write them at P.O. Box 28827, Kensington 2101, South Africa. A U.S. subscription to Exit is $60.]

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A public health message from the National Minority AIDS Council and the National Lesbian and Gay Health Association in association with GlaxoWellcome

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THE ADODI PRINCIPAL

By Lynwoodt Jenkins, Atlanta Correspondent

Sissy! Punk! Faggot! The intended malice of those words have been heard and/or directed toward most black gay men. The words have ricocheted through us like stray bullets, cut sharp like a surgeon's knife, burned acidly in our psyches, blackened our eyes as though we were in pool hall brawls, and have split our skulls wide open. The words are destructive; Heat seeking missiles used specifically to keep us silent, despaired, and predatory. They are the weapons of the ignorant, those who are unable to, or refuse to acknowledge peacefully, our innate and intimate ability to love other black men.

But Duncan Teague, Tony Daniels, and Malik Williams have altered the painful and nefarious implications of those words, into healing. Collectively known as "Adodi Muse," these men decisively insist upon a reclamation of identity. A claiming of power and a self-accepting cognition. Utilizing the stage as their medium, Adodi Muse informs, educates, and entertains homo and heterosexual audiences here in Atlanta, Georgia.

Sissy! Punk! Faggot! Adodi? Brazen in his approach, Tony was quick to inform me that "Adodi" is derived from the Yoruba language to mean, "A man who sleeps with other men." Elaborating, Tony continued, "It's just another way of calling us faggot. Except, we claimed the title and made 'faggot' what we wanted it to be."

Founded on February 27, 1995 by the suggestion of Jerel Cooper, what they wanted "Adodi" to signify is simple. "To inform other black gay men that it is o.k. to come out of the closet." Said Malik Williams, the cocoa-colored intellectual beauty who joined the ensemble last. "Tony and Duncan are my inspiration. They've helped me to be more accepting of who I am. And now, I just want to pass it on."

Interjecting gracefully in his usual and demanding diva fashion, Duncan stated, "We want to create a space that touches lives." As noted in their artistic statement, "Adodi Muse commits time and energy to the telling of our individual and collective experiences. Performing the work we pen and the work of others who support our survival..." And survival is paramount.

Specifically, the survival of black gay lives and the contributions of those lives who have, and who will continue to battle against adversities. Black gay men who are deserving of respect and brave in conviction, and who are inspiring by example.
Remembering painfully, Tony shared the fact that a close friend of his had died. Afterwards the deceased friend's mother found writings that acknowledged her son's homosexuality. And, in purposeful rage and/or shame, destroyed and discarded those writings as if they were of criminal evidence.

HIV positive for the last twelve years, Tony exclaimed, "I truly believe that, that memory, and the work I do in Adodi Muse, has played a major role in my duration with the virus. As a member of the ensemble, I present my work in blatant dialogue." Securing a lock of the many dreads that adorns his head like a Nubian Samson, Tony further expressed that he challenges not only the silence of HIV, but the silence of homophobia, racism and sexual role playing (top and bottom) in our community at large.

Some may not be prepared for the force that Adodi Muse propels off the stage into the audience. Moving fluid into song, dance and the sometimes shocking but most times exhilarating dialogue, Adodi Muse sets the standard.

Influenced by Essex Hemphill, Assoto Saint, Craig Harris, and Pomo Afro Homos (Post Modern Afro-American Homosexuals), Adodi Muse opened for Craig Hickman's, "Skin and Ornaments" during the National Black Arts Festival in 1996, performed for Charis Bookstore, as well as, the African-American gay and lesbian organizations, In The Life Atlanta, Inc., and 2nd Sunday.

An amalgamation of talent, Adodi Muse is just as profound individually. Duncan is published in Assoto's The Road Before Us, and also in Browning's Culture of Desire. Consistently working, Duncan has received accolades for his performances during Amethyst Pride in Washington, D.C., and more recently playing Lottie Jones in "Three Weeks," at Atlanta's own Center Stage Theater.

Respectively, Tony and Malik have utilized their talents in the performance poetry scene with; Afro Beats, Kalo's Coffee House, and the poetry slam Venus Magazine hosted during the Atlanta Black Gay Pride Celebration in 1995. Moving in the spirit of Essex, Craig Hickman and Assoto, Tony also wrote and performed his one man show, "Miles To Go Before I Sleep", during the 1996 Atlanta Black Gay Pride celebration, hosted by, In The Life Atlanta, Inc.

Sissy! Punk! Faggot! Adodi Muse! A local phenomena, and an exception to the rule.

For booking and/or performance information contact:
Ricky Wilson at 404/728-0617.
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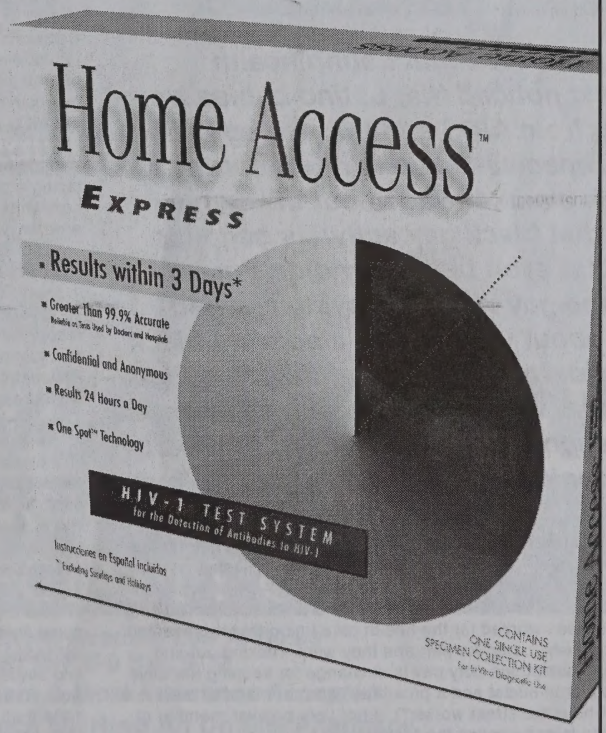

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OUT OF TIME:
THE RACE POLITICS OF AIDS IN PHILADELPHIA

by David R. Fair

For many years, low-income minority people with AIDS and their advocates have complained that they haven't been able to obtain enough public funds to build an AIDS service system that works for communities of color. A recent analysis showed that almost 80% of AIDS funding for direct care services goes to white-led organiza - tions. That report, as well as racial controversy surrounding the allocations and planning processes, have re-awakened debate on how future AIDS funding decisions will be made This article by David R. Fair, founder and first director of the city's AIDS office and the former director of We The People Living with AIDS/HIV, the nation's largest coalition of low-income PWAs, comments on these issues.

When it comes to race politics, the AIDS industry in Philadelphia has simply run out of time.

"It was in 1986 that Latino health activist noticed that Latino babies were dying from AIDS and that the so-called AIDS specialists wouldn't honor their health plans. It was about the same time that black gay activists began to see that even being gay didn't mean that the gay-run AIDS system would care about you---if you also were black and didn't "fit in" to a white gay subcul - ture that was busy focusing its energies on becoming a micro-market for beer companies and fashion magnates."

This year will mark the seventeenth anniversary of one of the first known diagnoses of AIDS in southeastern Pennsylvania -- a black woman, by the way. I knew about that diagnosis -- even though we didn't know it was AIDS --even before the official stats were being kept, because I worked for the health care union that represented the workers who cared for her, and they were freaking out and demanding hazardous duty pay in exchange for keeping her alive. She was a drug addict and a prostitute (what a friend of mine now calls an "industrial street worker"), a not very popular member of what would later be called the "underclass."

She didn't live very long.

From that day forward, a little known fact of life, or maybe of death, has tortured the well-intentioned efforts of thousands of people, both HIV-positive and negative, to keep people living with HIV/AIDS healthy and keep others from getting infected. That little known fact is: AIDS in Philadelphia has never "known no color" or been an "equal opportunity disease." AIDS has always, at least in Philadelphia, been an affirmative action disease, impacting on poor people of color much more directly and tragically than anyone else.

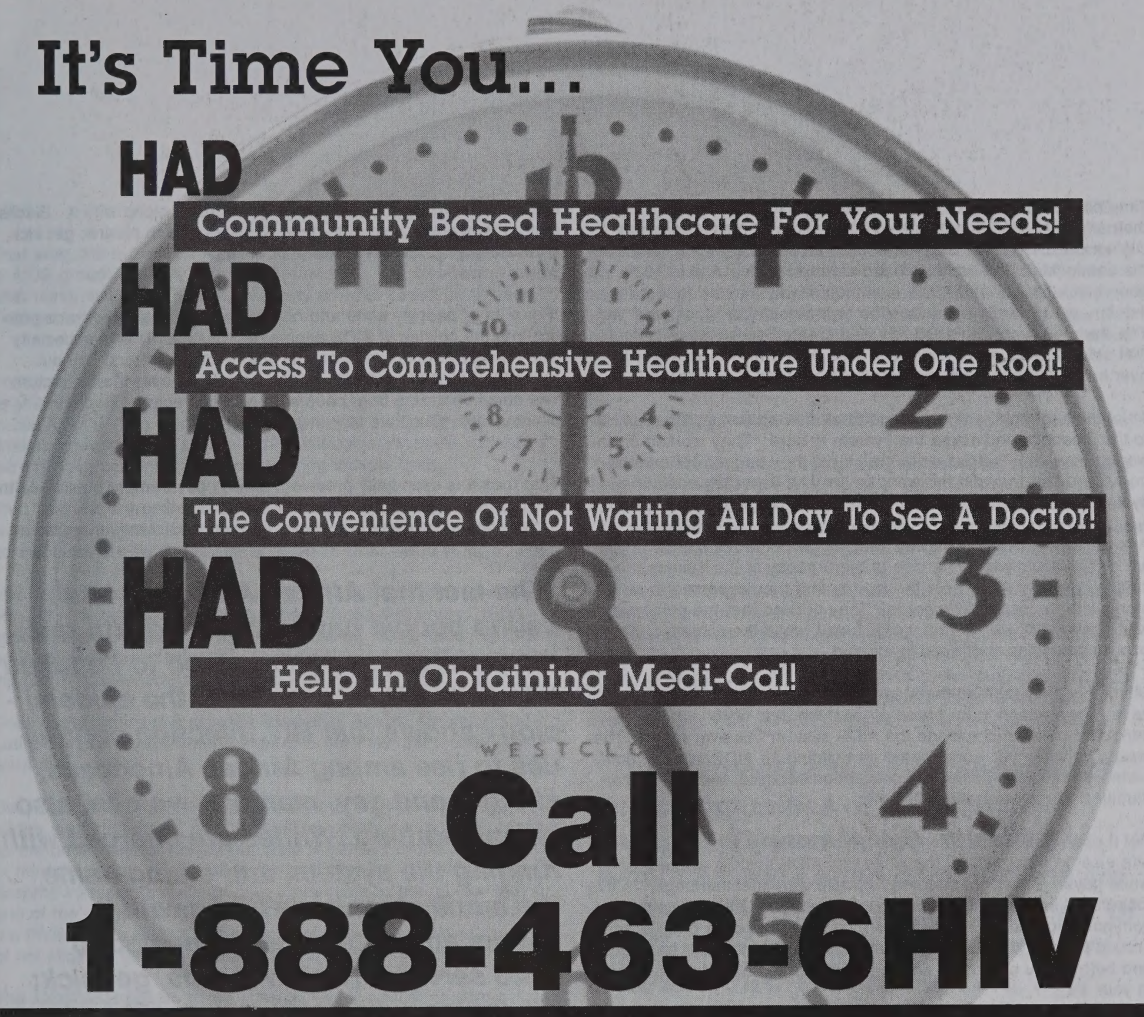
As the epidemic began to spread in the 1980s, Philadelphians, like everybody else, needed to rely on the efforts of the largely middle-class white gay community to do something about it. In 1983, then-city health commissioner Stu Shapiro convened a small meeting in his office of the ten or so people who seemed to really care, and made a commitment that made a lot of sense at the time. Since the media portrayal of AIDS was that it was a white gay disease, and since even most of the blacks getting AIDS were also gay, the AIDS system would be created within the context of that community. Money, as little of it as there was in those days, would be invested in the fledgling health promotion efforts that had already begun to take hold in the gay and lesbian communities, thanks to preexisting epidemics of sexually-transmitted disease. Decisions about what would be done with the money, what it's priorities were, what kind of strategies would be followed, who would get the jobs -- all of that would be left to the best judgment of the gay community leaders who were the first to come forward to combat AIDS.

It made sense, at the time. Not only were gay people obviously facing a genocidal epidemic, but almost everyone else, white and non-white, had their heads in the sand and didn't want to be bothered anyway.

Meanwhile, AIDS surveillance efforts continued in their routine, boring way. The numbers they came up with always showed a tendency toward a reality that the nascent AIDS system seemed unable to recognize. The truth they told betrayed an underlying fact of life that just didn't fit into Dr. Shapiro's well-meaning strategy: AIDS in Philadelphia was not going to be mostly gay for very long, and it was already not mostly white.

In the light of today's reality -- that over 72% of people living with HIV disease in the Philadelphia region are African American or Latino, and overwhelmingly poor -- that early decision might seem short-sighted. After all, it's only a little more than a decade later. But nobody cared about AIDS back in 1983 except for those of us who already were burying our closest friends, and no other choice seemed available.

We can't claim ignorance, though. It was in 1985 that registered nurse Rashidah Hassan saw what was happening and formed BEBASHI -- Blacks Educating Blacks About Sexual Health Issues -- and started experiencing how unresponsive a white gay AIDS network could be when the "consumer" was black and poor. It was in 1986 that Latino health activists like Carmen Paris noticed that Latino babies were dying from AIDS and that the so-called AIDS specialists wouldn't honor their health plans. It was about the same time that black gay activists like Michael Hinson, James Roberts and Tyrone Smith began to see that even being gay didn't mean that the gay-run AIDS system would care about you -- if you also were black and didn't "fit in" to a white gay subculture that was busy focusing its energies on becoming a micro-market for beer companies and fashion magnates. By 1988, even macho neighborhood types like Rev. Henry Wells and Steve Pina of One Day At A



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Time had taken notice, trying to build an HIV consciousness into their efforts to create a culture of hope and progress among the city's most disenfranchised African American people: drug addicts, the uneducated, the homeless and unemployable. And in 1989, poor, black people with AIDS -- till then simply cannon fodder for an industry which rarely paid attention to their opinion-- took over We The People Living with AIDS/HIV and created an advocacy effort that sought to put poor, minority PWAs on a path to real influence over how decisions were made that determined their right to life.

All of these people, and hundreds of others, spoke up. They came to the meetings and asked the system to care. They worked on the workgroups, they helped write the plans, they begged for crumbs from the table, they did the work anyway as best they could in a system that was addicted to "building capacity" somewhere else.

And, rapidly, almost right away, they came to the realization that while they could win lip service to the urgency of their cause they couldn't get anywhere near the money that they expected to go along with the supportive words. They noticed that the epidemic of white gay AIDS was, in fact, going away, while the epidemic in their own communities continued to expand.

Ultimately, they learned their lesson, one which the white gays have every reason to be proud of teaching, and which today presents the greatest challenge the AIDS system has ever faced. The lesson is: when you concentrate on building an AIDS system, complete with medical, social and prevention services, within the communities you are targeting, it works.

But it only works for the community you design it for, not for everyone else. In other words, the white gay AIDS system worked for white gays. Fewer got infected. People with infection began to live longer and better. Information about preventing infection became common knowledge, and behaviors changed because people were around to help you believe that saving your own life was important, and helped you overcome all the incentives to not change that got in your way.

It worked for white gays. It didn't work for anyone else. That's why poor African Americans are 850 times more likely to get infected with HIV than whites, according to the only official federal projection for our region that's ever been published.

***

The sad fact of Philadelphia's AIDS system is that even though the people who seek care for an AIDS diagnosis are overwhelmingly poor people of color, the people who are paid to determine the nature of, develop the principles for, and actually deliver those services, are almost uniformly white. Even the leading PWA activists are white. Said more simply: the AIDS system as currently constructed is one in which the role of white people is to deliver services, and the role of poor people of color is to receive them.

The fact that African American and Latino people have a higher death rate than whites is not supposed to be taken into account. The fact that the epidemiology shows that HIV infection continues to rise among African Americans, straight and gay, men and women, also means nothing. Whites are charged with running the system, and taking home the money that goes along with it. Blacks and Latinos are expected to need services (which means, get sick; otherwise, why have services?). And die.

***

For a lot of people, white and non-white, the intrusion of race politics into the politics of AIDS seems real painful. This is especially true for those hundreds of people who work day in and day out doing the best they can and feeling powerless over the big picture. The common theme from people on all sides echoes Rodney King's plaintive cry: "Can't we all just get along?"

That theme is especially prevalent among government public health officials, who almost without exception have borne the brunt of racially-tinged criticism but whose actions consistently marginalize

"The fact that African American and Latino people have a higher death rate than whites is not supposed to be taken into account. The fact that the epidemi - ology shows that HIV infection contin - ues to rise among African Americans, straight and gay, men and women, also means nothing. Whites are charged with running the system, and taking home the money that goes along with it. Blacks and Latinos are expected to need services (which means, get sick; otherwise, why have services?) and die."

those who try to open their eyes to what is happening.

There was a brief opening in 1993, when the federal government started telling local health authorities that even if local people didn't see that the "affirmative action" nature of the AIDS epidemic had taken hold, they did. That's when they started telling local planning groups that they had to give priority to involving people of color and people with HIV/AIDS in their decision making. The feds naively thought that more involvement would mean that we'd start shifting funding to AIDS efforts in minority communities, and building capacity where there hadn't been much before. And for a brief moment local officials responded allowing a significant portion of that year's AIDS funding increase (although a small portion of the overall funding available) to be diverted to a project, now called the Minority AIDS Project of Philadelphia and Vicinity, to begin the effort to develop direct care AIDS services within communities of color. The problem is that almost nothing else has happened since

1993.

That year, the number of AIDS case managers employed by minority AIDS groups jumped from zero (remember, this was twelve years after minorities comprised the majority of AIDS cases) to thirteen. Thirteen. It remains thirteen today.

That year, there were no black or Latino AIDS physicians supported by
public AIDS dollars. Now, there's one -- and he works only part-time and doesn't even practice in Philadelphia anymore, traveling here two nights a week from his real job in New York.

That year, four neighborhood-based "extended service centers" were set up to make it easier for low-income blacks and Latinos to connect into the AIDS system. And that's what we have now. Four.

Meanwhile, new clinical services were being developed elsewhere. Tens of new case managers were being hired elsewhere. AIDS-specific mental health programs were set up, home care expanded, peer counseling and services for women and children were receiving dramatically-increased funding. Elsewhere.

Despite the desire of a growing number of African American and Latino service organizations to get into the field, the money mostly went elsewhere.

Despite all the controversy, despite all the "participation," despite all the media attention, despite all the protests and debate, despite all the under-paid or (usually) unpaid volunteer efforts of thousands of minority people, they just weren't allowed in. The AIDS industry became increasingly willing to let them come to the table -- that's one of the reasons that the HIV Commission was established and the Philadelphia AIDS Consortium was reformed, but the practice of not allowing them to share in the meal stayed in place.

The AIDS virus has no color, after all. But the AIDS epidemic does.

***

In 1996, things took an important turn. Leading African American political figures -- State Sen. Hardy Williams, City Council President John Street and other black council members, State Reps. Dwight Evans, Vince Hughes, Harold James, Congressman Chaka Fattah --finally took the issue seriously. Most of them aren't very informed about what people with HIV/AIDS in their communities really need, and some of them are still hampered by homophobic and (what some contend are) ethically-challenged intentions. But in the down-and-dirty world of real politics, they had no trouble grasping the basic truth: the money wasn't going where it was supposed to go.

The political facts of life about AIDS and communities of color have changed. By and large, the African American and Latino communities are no longer in denial about the impact of AIDS. And in the larger world of old-fashioned politics, AIDS is no longer gay, and because of the disproportionate impact of the epidemic in minority communities, AIDS has now become the "property" of minority politics. A Mayor or a city councilman or a commissioner here or there might still respond to white gay politicos when it comes to AIDS, but the handwriting is on the wall: the black and Latino communities, and their political leaders, now realize that AIDS is their problem more than it is anyone else's, and the political officeholders have taken notice. And what's changed is that minority politicians have, finally, started to use their political weight to force the AIDS industry to finally do what it should have started doing seventeen years ago.

***

For the industry itself, this couldn't be happening at a worse time.

The PWA movement is growing weaker, distracted from its angry, demanding roots by the condescending decision to "allow" people with HIV to "participate" in more numbers in planning processes. That these processes have proven ultimately disempowering, especially to poor minority PWAs, has so far escaped notice. Built on the concept of co-optation and delay, they burden inexperienced and unpaid PWAs with countless intimidating meetings dominated by kindly bureaucrats and held on the principle of keeping everyone well-behaved -- a principle that has always been deadly to PWAs. That these processes violate the historical reality that progress for people with HIV/AIDS has never been achieved without anger, confrontation and a willingness to go to the mat on everything seems to be lost on most of today's crop of PWA

"The political facts of life about AIDS and communities of color have changed. By and larges, the African American and Latino communities are no longer in denial about the impact of AIDS...the black and Latino communi - ties, and their political leaders, now realize that AIDS is their problem more than anyone eles's."

activists, who seem more flattered to simply be there than energized to use their power in their own self-interest. That most real progress in Philadelphia has come from the leadership of poor African American PWAs also seems to have been forgotten, even by the poor black PWAs who still hold seats on the councils of so-called power.

Long-time centers of PWA advocacy like ACT UP and We The People suffer in this reality. ACT UP struggles for an agenda as its traditional media-oriented strategy and dependence on white non-PWAs reduces its impact. WTP, now a major AIDS service organization in its own right, finds itself in the fearful position of having to bite the hands that feed it. The loss of its founding PWA activists and the burnout of those who followed, most of whom are preoccupied with the daily realities of administering a 3,000-strong, very needy membership, leads to an understandable lack of institutional memory, and a downgrading of WTP's prominent history of direct

action. The momentum for organizing black people with HIV/AIDS and encouraging their leadership of advocacy efforts has shifted, from its historic base at WTP to groups like Project TEACH and One Day At A Time, neither of which was established for that role nor will ever be comfortable in pursuing it.

The mainstream AIDS system is also, to put it bluntly, tired. A few years ago, most white AIDS providers would have been troubled by a shift to a minority-focused AIDS bureaucracy, but would probably have been creative in trying to at least fit in. Now, most of the committed employees of AIDS organizations are simply too burned out to contemplate the nature of such a change or how it would affect their clients and their jobs.

Interestingly, even with all the charges of racism made about how allocations end up being made, few direct providers of service are perceived, even by the most militant minority advocates, as racist themselves. The criticisms are based on systemic issues, not personal ones.

But when the battle is pursued by the Hardy Williamses and John Streets of the world, those subtleties go by the wayside. Their bottom line -- the only one that matters, now that the AIDS industry has ignored the need to build minority capacity so well for so many years -- is money.

White AIDS activists, and many of those who are black and Latino, are offended by the focus on money. We're all supposed to be here because we care. But in the real world the facts show that the people with the money are the ones who survive -- a lesson that's not been lost on those, including poor black and Latino PWAs, who now advocate for a fundamental change in who's getting paid.

More money, of course, is not the only answer. We still need to struggle with the uncomfortable reality that minority capacity simply does not exist in some important areas where services are currently provided by white groups. The Minority AIDS Project of Philadelphia itself is relatively inexperienced in supporting direct care groups, having focused primarily on prevention and "risk reduction" activities since that's the only money it was allowed to get. And building a network of AIDS services in poor black and Latino communities is ultimately much more complex than the effort to do so in the middle-class white gay community ever was, with cultural norms, homophobia, class issues and the like playing a much more prominent role.

***

There are actually two bottom lines facing us.

Yes, one is money. If we keep spending the money the way we're currently spending the money, the charge that white people live off AIDS and people of color die from it will only become more true. We have to change the way we're spending the money. That's it. Just do it.

The other bottom line is, we have to do it right.

Where there's present capacity, such as in case management, mental health and substance abuse treatment, alternative therapies, food, emergency assistance, home care, etc., the choice is clear. Shift the money from where it is to the minority groups that are already in place and doing a good job, whether they are presently part of MAPP or not. There's a lot of them out there, if only we would reach out to them.

Where there's not present capacity for high-quality AIDS services, such as in the area of primary medical care, the choice is also clear. Invest in building networks of minority doctors and medical providers, use AIDS money to assure quality training and ongoing medical education, and to alleviate their financial risk. Do what Stu Shapiro and his successors Maurice Clifford and Bob Ross and Estelle Richman did when they thought the issue was building capacity in the white gay framework.

Build it. But this time build it where it counts now. And accept the unalterable fact that since it's low-income African American and Latino people living with HIV who the system is supposed to be helping, they're going to have to have a leading role in determining what happens.

Help them. Don't disempower them. Train them if they need it, not only on the standards of this or that service, but on the basic principles of how to overcome the intimidation and complexity of how decisions are made.

Where there's political issues -- like homophobia and the flight of the black and Latino middle class from the intractable problems of the underclass -- fight over them. If black and Latino providers are not thought to be AIDS-competent, teach them, and if they won't learn, throw them out. If you subscribe to the (I think unwarranted) belief that black and Latino political leaders are homophobic or have questionable motives, turn the lights on them. Take the risks. Those issues won't go away if we don't deal with them directly.

And bring the full weight of the public health system and its basic principles, and the conscious, angry, outspoken voice of minority PWAs -- to bear in those battles. It's the only way to win.

What could result, if we accept the basic reality that we have to start spending the money differently, is a new kind of partnership, one that builds on the expertise of the past to invest in a new and more promising future.

It takes vision, perhaps more than our present leaders possess. It takes courage, something that's always been in short supply in the public health bureaucracy in Philadelphia. It takes trust, something those in charge today will have a hard time getting since they haven't earned it. It takes a willingness to allow new leaders to have their chance; the ones we've had haven't been all that stellar, after all, and it's not fair to require guarantees now that those leaders be trustworthy by old standards when we've never required such guarantees before.

We just have to do what it takes, now and forever. We can't give up. None of us, whatever the pain or the challenges, has the right to give up.

The Last Time I had Sex…

Please read this statement and then complete the survey below:

Despite good penetration from safer sex educational efforts, recent studies report an increase in potentially unsafe sex behaviors among gay men and other men who have sex with men. This research study hopes to assist in making safer sex education more effective.

Your responses will be anonymous and all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. You must be at least 18 to complete this survey.

This survey should take about 5 minutes to complete. Please fill it out alone and answer each question honestly and openly. This survey is voluntary and you don't have to answer any question you don't want to answer. Although you may not benefit directly from this research, this study will potentially contribute to improving safer sex education and reducing the spread of HIV.

This research is being done by Dennis Sapire as part of his graduate training for a doctorate in psychology at the California School of Professional Psychology. Some of the questions in this study may leave you feeling uncomfortable. If this should happen, Dennis Sapire, or the supervisor of this study, Linda Beckman, Ph.D., who is on the faculty of CSPP, will be available to talk to you and can be reached via (818) 284-2777 x 3043.

Please mark an "X" at the end of this sentence to indicate that you have read these paragraphs and understand them, and based on this information, that you agree to participate in this study. (Mark "X" here → ___)

Please complete all questions. Do not put your name anywhere on this form.
Thank you for participating in this survey.

Please return the completed survey within 10 days to:
Dennis Sapire, P. O. Box 691868, West Hollywood, CA 90069-1868.

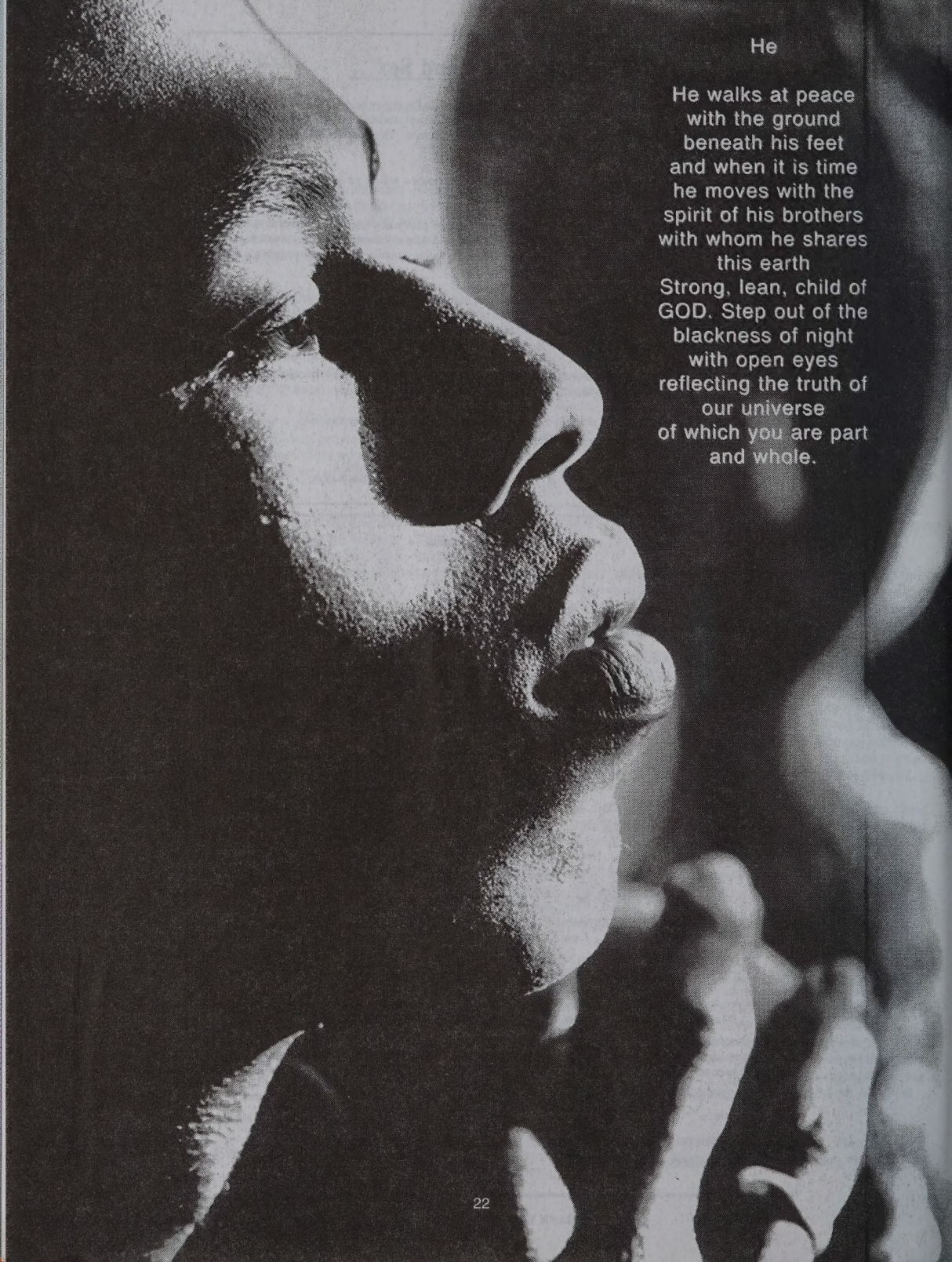
Background Information:

1. Age: ____ years
2. ZIP code _____
3. Ethnicity _____
4. Education ___ Below High School ___High School ___College ___Graduate/Professional School
5. Orientation ___Gay ___Bi ___Straight
6. Aware of your HIV status? ___Yes ___No
7. (Optional) HIV status ___ + ___-
8. Rate the following sex acts from 1 to 5 on the basis of how intimate they are for you ("1" being least intimate to "5" being most intimate):
   ___Mutual masturbation ___Oral sex ___ Deep kissing ___Cuddling/Massage ___Anal sex

The last time you had sex with another single man -

9. Were you single? ___Yes ___No
10. How old was your partner? ___ years (Please estimate)
11. Was this your ___1st ___2nd ___3rd (or more) time together?
12. Approximately how long ago did it happen? ___ Days ___Weeks ___Months ___Years
13. Which of these did you do? (check all that apply)
    ___Mutual Masturbation ___Deep Kissing ___Anal sex ___Cuddling/Massage ___Oral sex
14. If you had anal sex, were you ___top ___bottom ___both?
15. Did you want to do things your partner was not willing to do? ____Yes ____No
16. If you answered "yes" to 15, which of these would you have done if your partner had been willing?
    ___Mutual Masturbation ___Deep Kissing ___Anal sex ___Cuddling/Massage ___Oral sex
17. How sexually attractive was your partner? (please circle)
    Least sexy man I would have sex with 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Most sexy man I can imagine having sex with
18. Where (between "1" and "10") do you think your partner would have rated you on sexual attractiveness?
    Lowest 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Highest
19. If you had oral sex, did you use a condom? ___Yes ___No
20. If you had anal sex, did you use a condom? ___Yes ___No

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

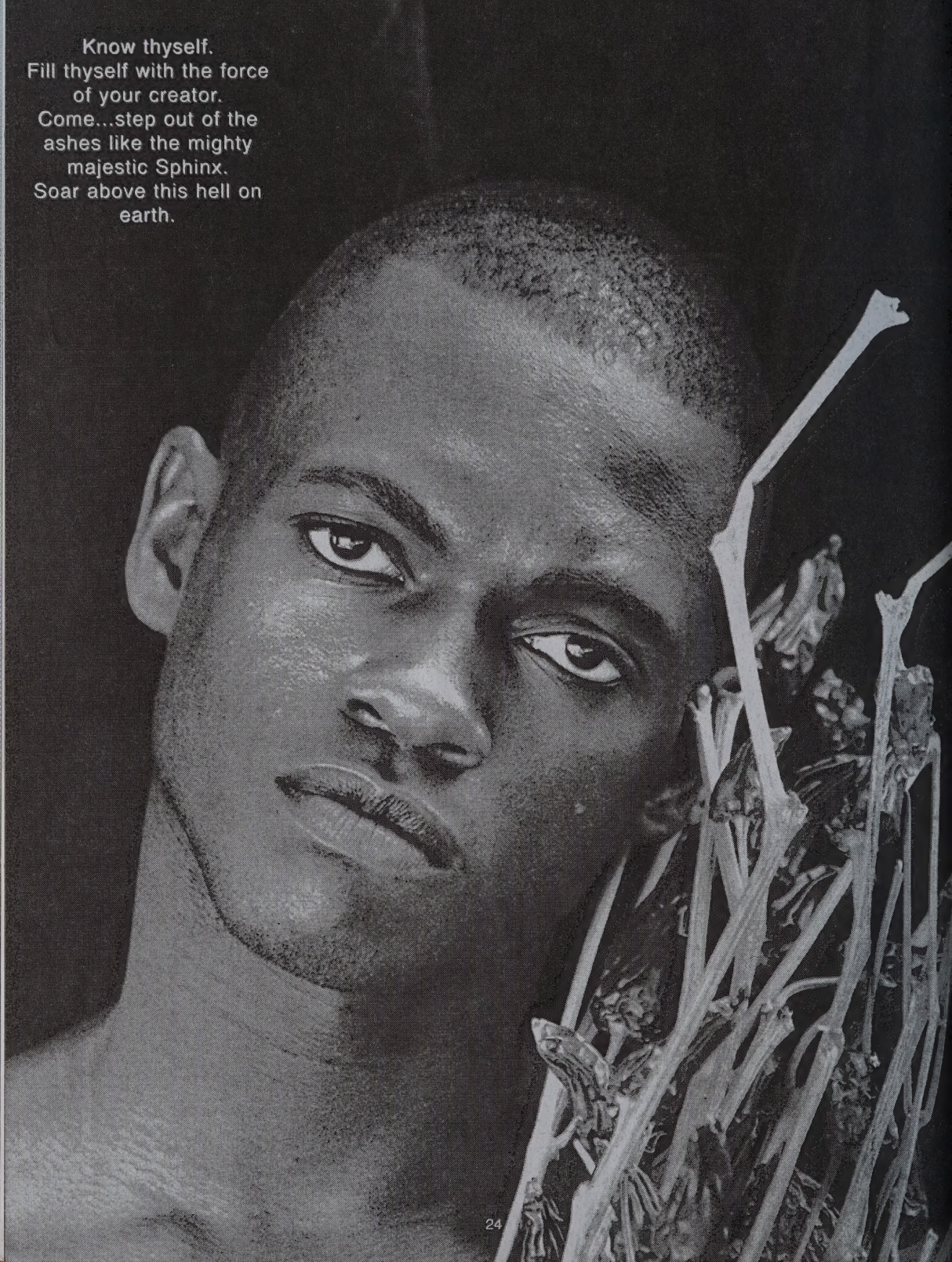


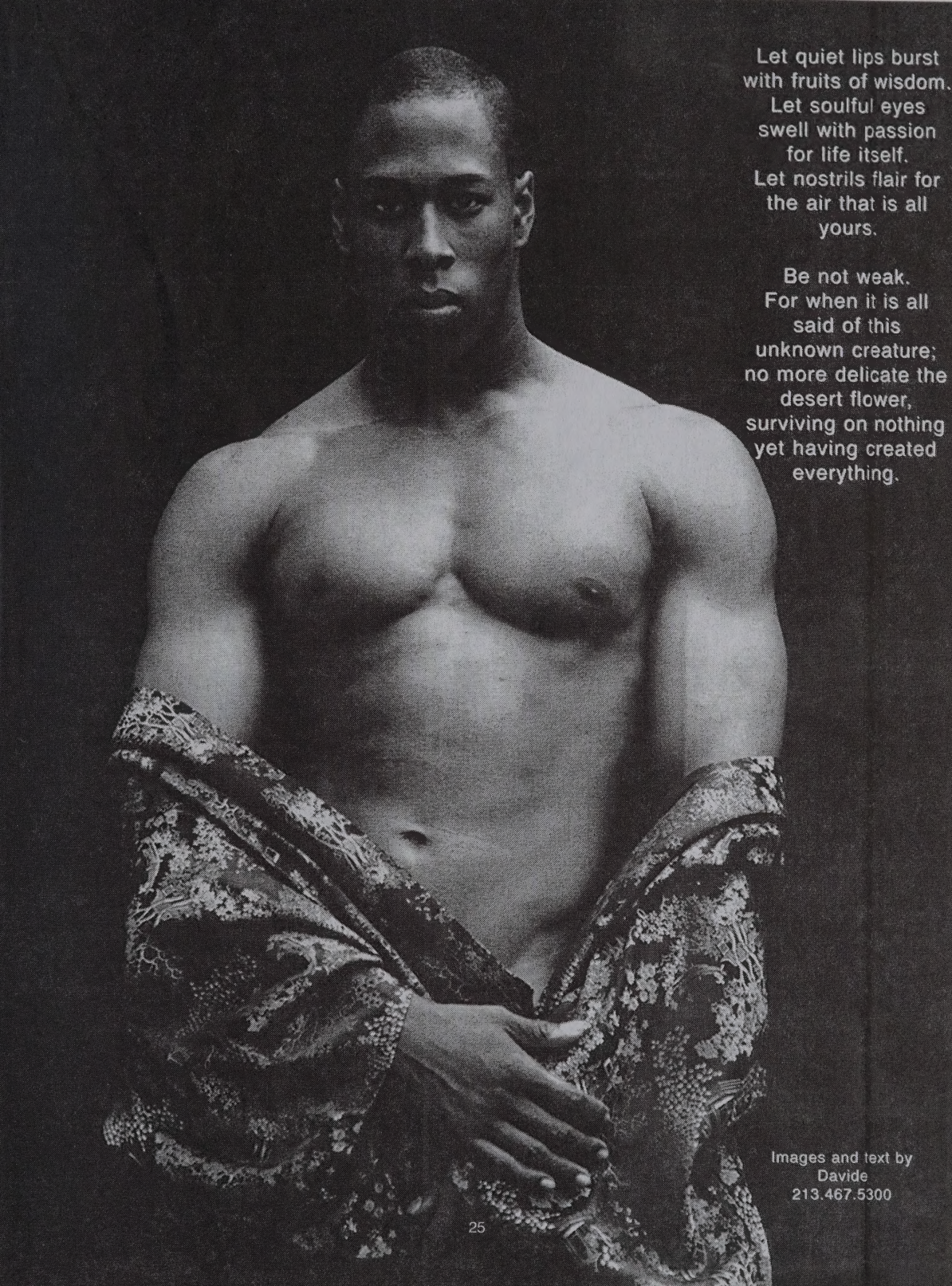
He

He walks at peace
with the ground
beneath his feet
and when it is time
he moves with the
spirit of his brothers
with whom he shares
this earth
Strong, lean, child of
GOD. Step out of the
blackness of night
with open eyes
reflecting the truth of
our universe
of which you are part
and whole.

Bold, swift being filled
time, space and energy.
Without question of place,
yet through acceptance
and grace; no more cunning the panther or shrewd
the crow.

Fragile souls embodied in
might machines of flesh
and bone.
Polished skin stretched
taut over
endless landscape of muscle, sewing the seed of an
entire universe
in a single virile touch


Know thyself.
Fill thyself with the force of your creator.
Come...step out of the ashes like the mighty majestic Sphinx.
Soar above this hell on earth.



Let quiet lips burst
with fruits of wisdom.
Let soulful eyes
swell with passion
for life itself.
Let nostrils flair for
the air that is all
yours.

Be not weak.
For when it is all
said of this
unknown creature;
no more delicate the
desert flower,
surviving on nothing
yet having created
everything.

Images and text by
Davide
213.467.5300

photo by DAVIDE

CELEBRATING A GATHERING OF LIKE SOULS: THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY NATIONAL BLACK LESBIAN AND GAY CONFERENCE AND INSTITUTES

written and photographed
by William H. Jones Jr.

Oakland, California---I would journey to Long Beach in Southern California to seek spiritual renewal. Creating personal emotional connections with fellow freedom fighters would be my highest priority. It has become clear that our liberation will not come through the political process (though that remains very important). It would come from the collective liberation of our souls.

Spirit would be the focus of this weekend. We would be asked to open our hearts wide open, engage in the internal Jihad of spiritual work to transform our lives; bond with our fellow participants, and enlighten our community by becoming archetypes of the kind of people we wish to live around.

Thursday

The day was set aside for HIV issues. Former Surgeon General Doctor Joycelyn Elders, the keynote speaker, thanked us for giving her our support while she was in office as well as sticking with her after she was relieved of her duty.

Concerned that families are still not talking about HIV, Doctor Elders stated that comprehensive health education in the schools is a major priority and stressed the importance of gay and lesbian youth having mentors to talk to. She also emphasized the need to educate the church because "nobody has yet. They have to do more than moralize from the pulpit."

Later that morning I attended a workshop given by Kwame Banks titled To Be Young Gifted and...

Many issues were discussed. Among them, the search for identity---who am I, where can I get positive messages from? Many black gay youth have to cope with the issue of shame. Some are throwaway youth; rejected by parents for their sexual nature. Others must deal with not only society's bigotry toward male effeminacy and female masculinity but that same kind of bigotry within the homosexual community. Support for gay youth is critical and it was acknowledged emphatically the need for individuals who can relate and offer that support.

Later in the day I attended the HIV luncheon before taking a time out for personal relaxation---a long hot bath, incense, wine, candles and jazz. A soothing party for one.

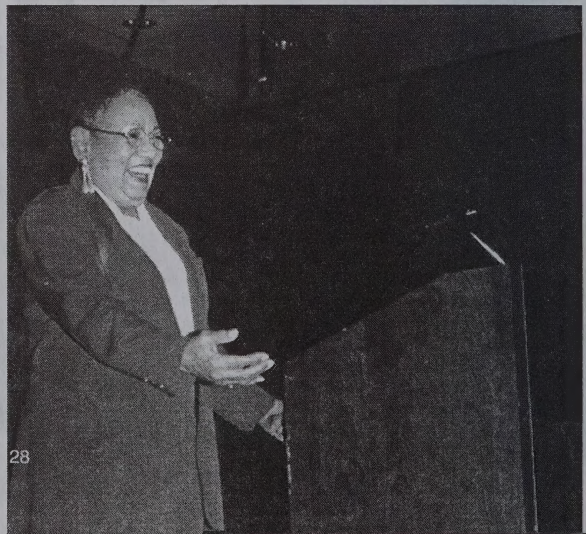
I then returned to the workshops where I saw noted HIV expert and physician Dr. Wilbert Jordan. He introduced me to the audience as one of his most angry and hostile patients who came to be one of his most loved patients.

That evening I attended a Pajama Jam across town where, even though there weren't a lot a jammies, there was great dancing, great fun and great fellowshipping. A perfect close for day one.

Friday

Blaine Teamer, activist, actor and writer---2 years ago he was honored with an SBC Brother of the Year Award for "Black Coffee", his brilliant stage play that chronicled 20th Century black gay America as it passed through the confines of a small black gay owned coffee shop---was featured on this day's luncheon, as he read from his new novel, "The Secret Life of Sister Little: Confessions of A Funeral Director".

The evening reception and program began with a wonderful ceremony depicting our experience in America and featured a great love poet, June Jordan, speaking, appropriately on this day, Valentine's Day. The theme of her presentation---and for me the entire conference--- was "Changing The World Through Creating Revolutionary Personal Relationships". During the 60's she was concerned that the change of



emphasis from black power to black is beautiful would dull the focus of the movement. It took falling for a co-worker for her to ease her fears. Her relationship energized her commitment to the struggle beyond any level of enthusiasm she formerly experienced.
Her words:

"Is it sexual or racial identity that will catapult each of us into creative urgency with social change? I do not believe that who you are guarantees anything important about what you will choose to mean in the context of other lives... How do our personal issues diffuse or propel our personal commitments? ... The greater Jihad or the greater struggle takes place within us. ... It is time to begin the greater Jihad. It's time to scrutinize ourselves, to identify and to determine what exactly do we signify on principle..... As long as there are lesbian and gay Americans who view sexuality as a first and last defining facet of their existence and therefore will not fight for the preservation, improvement and democratization of public education; then for that cause, I am not one with you. You are not one with me.

"My fight for sexual freedom, my fight for the right to hold my lover's hand or to kiss her lips in every day life is a personal fight. It is part of a personal fight for freedom. So in my own greater Jihad I am struggling to make absolutely manifest a principled commitment to the principles of freedom and equality. And I believe that this is the righteous struggle and this must continue if I hope to deserve coalitional support for my love,my people, my country, my world. That is how I see change happening. First and finally, it must happen in my own heart and my own mind. ...IF we will only join together, equally acknowledging our needs and desires as equally valid and together commit to freedom and commit to equality with the fundamentals of a universal human rights agenda., then we can be successful, a whole gang of principled comrades hanging out; close, solid, clear and invincible."

There was much to think about in our Sister's words; much to ponder throughout the reception given by the National Task Force on AIDS Prevention that followed.

Immediately following the reception was the Friday Cabaret. Among the many stellar performers was a troupe from Chicago, The Real Read, formed by Byron Stewart. They entertained with material that chronicled the love lives of black gay men living in the hood. The most powerful of their pieces featured a young street hustler living in sexual denial even as he enjoys sex with his male customers more and more.

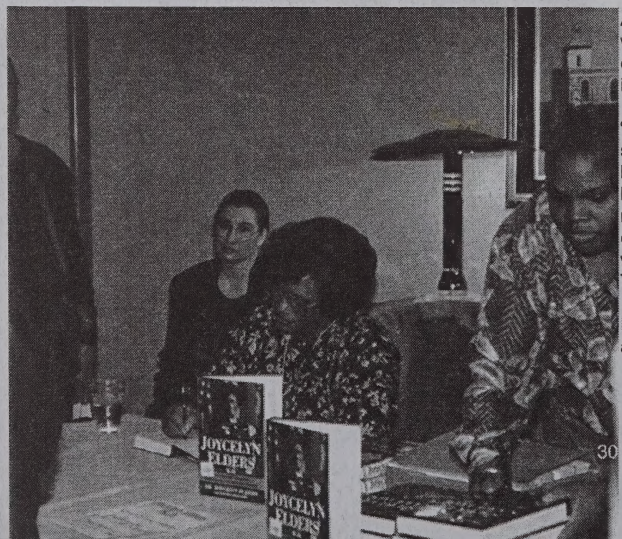
Later that night was a dance where the energy was electric and it seemed as if every fine brotha from the Conference was on the dance floor. With my head filled with dreams, it was time to retire for the night and let sleep feed my fantasies.

Saturday

The morning began with the opening plenary conducted by Pulitzer Prize winning author and activist Alice Walker. She read from her latest book entitled "Anything We Love Can Be Saved", a treatise on becoming motivated toward activism, and later implored us to liberate ourselves from the oppression of orthodox Christianity:

"We have to deal with our indoctrination. ' In sorrow I shall bring forth children; and my desire shall be to my husband, and he shall rule the universe over thee'---Genesis...What a burden to think one is conceived in sin rather than in pleasure, that one is born into evil rather than into joy...What is happening in the world more and more is that people are attempting to decolonize their spirits. A crucial act of empowerment, one that might return revenue to the earth, thereby saving it.

"Sister Walker, my mother, was thanked for making the church so beautiful. But this wise woman who knew so many things about life and the



mysteries of the heart, the spirit and the soul, was never asked to speak to the congregation.

"'Pagan' means 'of the land, country dweller', all of which my family was. It also means a person's primary spiritual relationship with nature...but there was no way to ritually express the magical intimacy with creation without being accused and ridiculed."

That night was the Awards Banquet where recognition was given to many who have unselfishly maintained the struggle for the struggle's sake alone, without personal glory. It was a night for their struggles to be glorified.

It is about trusting the universe. I was fretting about how I would get from my hotel in Long Beach to Agape Church located 50 plus miles west in the city of Santa Monica without a car. Well, as fate and trust would have it, I found a friend who belonged to the same faith as I and to the same church.

After the Awards Ceremony we watched the performers in an evening of black gay and lesbian culture. Afterwards---about 1 in the morning---I dropped by the dance to shake my booty just a little. My friend and I hooked up afterwards and drove to his place for the night.

Sunday

Morning. Beautiful. Warm. Clear. Dressed and mellow, I lounged on the porch of his apartment while he dressed for church. We made the 9 am service at Agape Church of Religious Science. The minister, Dr. Michael Beckworth, had a message: 'Don't limp into life, leap into life.'

I've been doing that all weekend.

My friend dropped me back off at the Hilton in Long Beach, arriving just in time for the Sunday luncheon. I hugged him and watched him speed away. Instead of packing I take that final bath, then head for the luncheon. My mood turned to tears. Friends I had made during the weekend were beginning to depart. I presented a belated Valentine's card to another friend, thanking him for helping make my weekend a great one. Not wanting this experience to end, I still had not completed packing, and it was 2:30 pm when my father and brother came for my bags, interrupting a spiritual reading I was having.

But all things must end. Each time I attend the National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Conference, I make personal resolutions to continue the struggle and not backslide into feeling that mundane conditions have power over me.

As June Jordan's words gave us a manifesto for the conference, as well as a strategy to conduct our struggle for our liberation, the words of Cornel West, another distinguished conference speaker, admonished us to pay close attention to the world we live in:

"What we love well in our short lives constitutes our heritage. This struggle raises the fundamental question; what does it really mean to be human? Defining ourselves in relation to those we lovingly bury, we have to be able to situate ourselves in a story bigger than us, that relates ourselves to the dead so that we can project our future grounded in the struggle. To raise the question of being human is to wrestle with the problem of evil. It requires the most difficult form of courage. The courage to be. The courage to love."

I continue my internal Jihad each day; to confront the concept of lack and create relationships built on faith and trust.

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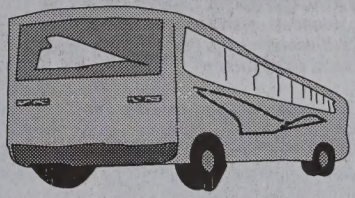

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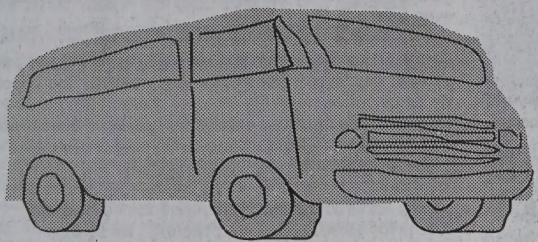

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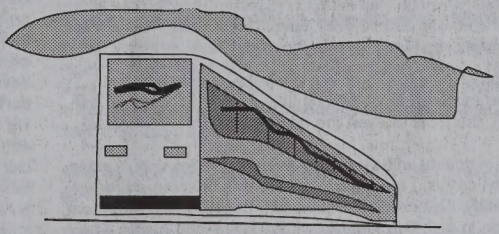

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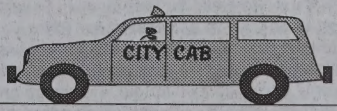

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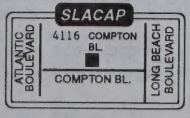


Funded by RYAN WHITE Comprehensive AIDS Research Emergency (CARE ACT) 1990

THE EMPOWERMENT COLLECTIVE: THE CONTENT OF OUR ENTREPRENEURIAL CHARACTER

by
Donald L. Perry II
Managing General Partner, Pine Cobble Partners

"The barriers to black progress in America today are clearly as much psychological as they are social or economic. We have suffered as much as any group in human history, and if this suffering has enno - bled us, it has also wounded us and pushed us into defensive strate - gies that are often self-defeating...so that we are victimized as much by our own buried fears as by racism."

---Shelby Steele, The Content of Our Character

As a management consultant, I routinely help clients deal with difficult strategic issues such as What customers to focus on or How to cre-ate value in their customer relationships or How to respond to a changing competitive environment. The answers to these issues are often critical to the ultimate success or failure of the entrepreneurial firm and thankfully, these issues are totally devoid of race. However, for African-American entrepreneurs, there is an entire other dimen-sion of issues which is almost totally about race, about the relation-ships with our black brothers and sisters. When entrepreneurs are in

"Black people, in general, have built such a wide and deep repertoire of defensive strate - gies to protect ourselves from the pain of racism, that in the process, we have severely stunted the potential of our community to achieve a measure of self-sufficiency, econom - ic self-determination and wealth."

the grip of this other dimension, all too often the people with the greatest promise have the most difficult time finding success. In this other dimension, the tools of even the best consultant are useless.

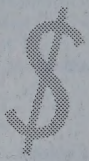
Our community is riddled with Streets, Avenues, Boulevards, Circles and Places, each carrying the hopes and dreams of some entrepre-neur and her family, nestled on the sidewalk, behind some storefront, on a factory floor, in an office high above the noise and bustle. But look closely and one can see the tattered edges and fraying fabric of hopes stretched taut and the shards of dreams shattered. Martin Luther King, Vermont, Western, Central, Adams, Jefferson, Crenshaw, Florence, pick one, pick another, it matters not because on all of these streets, all throughout our community there are places where hope lies dormant and dreams are dead and the streets are not paved with gold. Listen to the voices and beneath the bluster of "things in the works", "big deal cookin'" and "movin' so fast, don't have time to stop", there is the plaintive and melancholy sound of souls in torment, caught between the desire for success and the fear of acquiring it.

Black people, in general, have built such a wide and deep repertoire of defensive strategies to protect ourselves from the pain of racism, that in the process, we have severely stunted the potential of our community to achieve a measure of self-sufficiancy, economic self-determination and wealth. Thus, we settle for less than we should, thinking it is all we can get or all that we are entitled to. Thus, we avoid going outside of our own when building a business because we fear that white folks won't buy from us. Thus, we spend years getting credentials and degrees only to charge less for our knowledge and skill than it cost to acquire them, because we don't think people will pay for quality from a black man. Thus, we refuse to do business with our black brothers and sisters unless we have no other alternatives, because...because...because we are ashamed and we want so des-perately to belong, to be accepted, to be welcomed, to be invited into that warm and happy place that is reflected back to us from the tele-vision set where everything is better, finer, purer and the ice is colder.

How are we to build a strong and viable black community when we are so conflicted by our own fears, self-doubt, rage and ignorance?

How are we to trust our black brothers and sisters when we do not even trust ourselves?

These are the fundamental issues which confront us as the new mil-lennium dawns with still more bright promises and opportunities. Will we as black people finally take our share of the riches to come or will we be left wailing in our ghettos for handouts from a disinterested society that has no more time for us, no more need for us, no more desire to hear us?



Having endured the most repressive form of human cruelty for some two hundred years, I believe that black people are particularly well prepared to thrive and prosper in a hostile environment. When my clients call me, they do so because the world they knew, the comfortable place that allowed them to earn a good living, has ceased to exist and all around them are hostile forces eager to forcibly take their customers, their employees, their secrets and their future away from them. My clients have had it too easy too long that they have forgotten how to fight for survival. But we blacks know all about survival. We wrote the book. Looking into the new millennium, know-ing how to survive will be one of the most valuable skills for any entrepreneurial firm to possess. Being able to respond, adapt, change and stay flexible without losing the vital sense of Knowing Who You Are and Knowing Where You Come From, these are what black people learned while in chains and thus we have a great head start on everyone else as the millennium approaches. Because our survival skills will be THE most important skills in the 21st Century.

In an entrepreneurial context, we can build companies that sell exclu-sively to non-blacks, and it won't affect our ability to remain black. We can dream of billion dollar deals and know that our brains are the same as anyone else's and with equal skill, equal daring and equal bits of providence, we, too can become wealthy beyond measure. Above all, just because our skin is dark doesn't mean that we can't

"Having endured the most repressive form of human cruelty for some two hundred years, I believe that black people are partic - ularly well prepared to thrive and prosper in a hostile environment."

have all the marbles or that we can't have our cake and eat it too, if that is what we want to try to do. We can have high ambitions and we can attain them. We can build better mouse traps and make ice that is cooler than any other.

But to do any of these things, we must first learn to believe in our-selves and to trust our hearts and to look for our reflection in the

eyes of our brothers and sister. We must learn to see ourselves both as we would wish to be seen and as others see us. We must put humility before pride and truth before dishonor. We must remember those lessons our grandmothers taught us, about kindness, courtesy, respect and the golden rule---about doing unto others as we would have them do unto us. We must remember our values as black people, how our community standing with us can make us stronger and more powerful than standing strongly by our self, alone. But we must

"We must first learn to believe in ourselves and to trust our hearts and to look for our reflection in the eyes of our brothers ands sisters."

know, as well, that if we should stand alone against the world, we have an indomitable spirit that is also a legacy of our past and it will shield us and provide strength when we thought we had none. We must have patience with our brothers and sisters and show them the other cheek even when they have hurt us. We must reach out to them and hold them and heal them and help them deal with the pain, the rage, the fear and the longing which have so crippled them.

If we build businesses which embody these values and which reflect these ideals, then black entrepreneurs can accomplish anything they wish to achieve. Look around and listen to the horrors of "downsizing", "right-sizing", "restructuring" and re engineering" and you will see the failure of Corporate America in the making. Big companies have forgotten the basic values and principles of good living and good community. Their error will make it difficult for them to attract good workers, who increasingly desire to balance work and family life; or to gain customer loyalty, since customers cannot receive exceptional service from a dispirited work force. If black entrepreneurs build their firms around the values and principles that Corporate America has so cavalierly abandoned, then the new millennium will indeed be a successful and prosperous place for our community. Because these principles are part of the legacy we built during our servitude in chains and they helped us to endure the injustices we faced then and today. They are the principles in our spirituals and they are the substance of our mothers' prayers for our lives to

If black entrepreneurs build their firms around the values and principles that Corporate America has so cavalierly abandoned, then the new millennium will indeed be a successful and prosperous place for our community.

be better and richer and fuller and less pain-filled.

Management consultants do not often deal with the spiritual in order to fix the secular problems and issues we confront. But sometimes, and I think it increasingly so, it IS our values and principles which define our ability to achieve success and find fulfillment. The content of an entrepreneur's character is as much a part of competitive advantage as the money he has in the bank or the technology that drives her factory, and coming from a very rich and deep tradition of principles, values and ideals, black entrepreneurs should have especially strong advantages going into the next millennium. Let us not forget Who we are and Where we have come from, for this knowledge shall indeed make us free.

RIDIN' WITH MS. NIKKI

by Nikki Johnson, Consumer Advocate

Rating: 4=excellent 3=good 2=average 1=fair

Style (interior/color/etc.)	4
Gas mileage	4
Performance	4
Comfort	4
Equipment (tape/CD/etc.)	3
Price	4

The 1997 Oldsmobile Bravada is a genuine sport utility vehicle. This 4.3 liter rated at 190 horsepower, smooth electronically controlled four-speed automatic transmission and the new improved system four-wheel disc brakes. Speaking of brakes, the weather has been very bad here in the Bay Area as in most places. Well, the 4-wheel brakes definitely received there test today. When entering the freeway ramp there was a car that didn't understand the law of merging into traffic, so I was forced to apply pressure to the Bravada 4-wheel brakes. I must confess, they could stop on a dime!

As you check my rating chart above for this 1997 Bravada, it's score is almost perfect.

The Bravada is a great family car. I took some children to school and they loved it! Especially the storage area.

The sound system was nice, but lost a point because there wasn't a CD player in it so I'm not able to comment on it's sound. There are two very important items for me that a vehicle must have and that is where the coffee cupholder is placed and the music system. The Bravada had cup holders everywhere, even for the passengers in the back seat area. What a plus!

The tan leather interior complimented the green exterior color. A lovely combination.

With the bad condition of the weather across the country the Oldsmobile is quite happy to provide the prospects flooding into this segment with a Bravada that excels in tough conditions. The Bravada was entered in the 4, 750-mile Alcan Winter Rally where conditions were so adverse that the event had to be shortened by a few miles due to impossible road conditions. But in spite of 35 degrees below zero temperatures, thick fog and heavy snow, two Bravadas in the stock class came through with flying colors.

Until next issue, drive like you did when you tested for your license. Careful!

HERE'S GRANDMA:

A HOMOPHOBIC BLACK GRANDMA CALLS AMASSI FOR HELP PART 2

by

Cleo Manago

When we last left off with PART 1 two issues ago, after a long conversation in the parking lot, the teenager Stacey and I were heading back to AMASSI to meet Mary (his grandmother). Stacey had calmed down a little, but still appeared apprehensive to face her again.
Contemplative, he walked behind me, very slowly, as we headed for the door. Concerned, I asked him how he felt about continuing our dialogue with his grandmother. He explained that he was tired of it, tired of the conflict, tired of being put down, of having no place else to go.

Stacey was apparently very traumatized. The lack of support for his way of loving, and the conflict with his grandmother seemed to have taken a toll on his spirit. As he spoke, I reflected on him mentioning that because he was too young for bars he went to Centinela Park to meet others like him. His clothing, at least on this day, was very seductive. I assumed he might be having sex in the park. I made a note to remember this and to intervene quickly on providing Stacey with HIV/AIDS risk-reduction support, and to hook him up for dialogue with peers to help reduce his risk for infection, or reinfection if already HIV positive.

Mindful of Stacey's anxiety, I suggested to him that during our session, if he felt particularly challenged or upset, to look up at me. This would be my cue to comfort him. He smiled and said, "OK."

"Listen," I said, "resolving this will take both you and your grandmother. Her opinions about your sexuality aren't necessarily the opinions of God (which I assumed were some of his worry), but her personal opinion. Stacey we all have points of view, few that come from within us. Many are influenced by unexamined traditions, assumptions and ideas inherited by societal circumstance. These traditions are created by people, not God. As a result of Black people's oppressive history in this country, judgmental
and homophobic thinking can be mistaken as common sense or God's will. But it's often a man and his biases that created these ideas."

Stacy responded with, "My grandmother tells me all the time that I'm a sinner and that I'm going to hell for being a punk!"

"Now listen. How well do you know your grandmother? Well a better question is; Do you think that she lives her whole life based on what she says "the Lord" expects?"

With a smirk, he says, "Hell, NO!"

"Well then. Yes, Mary is your grandmother, your guardian, your elder and deserves respect from you. You also deserve respect and to respect yourself. We all have a lot to learn. Your grandmother is doing the best she can with things as she sees them. That she is even willing to come to AMASSI and talk about this is a good sign. I think it's a sign, regardless of her complaints and opinions, of her love and concern for you. We should go in now and be considerate of her time too. Just hang in there and know
that today and maybe not just today your voice and opinions will count. OK?"

Smiling with relief, again , he says, "OK."

As we headed for AMASSI's front door Stacey walked behind me as if I was his shield. When we entered Mary was in the lobby gathering reading materials (including SBC in one hand). She looked up and said, "So you calmed him down, huh?" Watching Stacey prepare to roll his eyes I smiled at him then looked back to Mary.

"Yes. He's calm. We talked a little and I was finally able to find out more about Stacey and his concerns."

"His concerns! He has concerns?"

"Of course he does. Anyway, let's discuss everyone's concerns in my office."

Alarmed, Mary blurted, "Well I got to go!" I've been waiting here for almost an hour. I got things to do. I can't be around here all day."

"It shouldn't take all day, especially now that I have an understanding of both your points of view. Do you have an appointment you will be late for if we continue."

Stacey replies, "No she don't got no appointment anywhere. Come on Grandmama let's talk."

We were both stunned (at least I was, but Mary appeared to be too) when Stacey spoke up like he did. "You got time grandma. Ain't nothing else on your schedule today."

Mary says, "I'm not gonna be here all day..... How much longer will this take!?"

We all went back into my office. Once we began talking Mary was anxious to know what Stacey and I talked about outside. She seemed fascinated that Stacey even had concerns. It appeared that she was concerned that Stacey's "concerns " were critical of her, that he was too young and irresponsible to have concerns. I asked Stacey to explain to his grandmother how he felt. During his explanation he brought up how frustrated he was because he felt he didn't want to live with Mary any more and had no place else to go. Mary appeared angry in response to this and attempted to interrupt. I gently requested that she allow Stacey to express himself, that whatever he felt was indeed how he really felt and to please listen. She struggled to do so but finally did allow Stacey to continue. Stacey went on to mention that he felt bad when Mary called him a sinner, punk or sissy. He started to cry when mentioning that he hated coming home and would stay out all day waiting for her to leave so he wouldn't have to hear about what was "wrong" with him.

As if unable to take it anymore, Mary shouted. "And what is your part in this? You making it appear that I'm doing all of this horrible stuff to you. Who feeds you? Who gives you the money to buy those crazy clothes you have on? Who provides a roof over your head? Who? If you want to leave. That's fine. I am sick and tired of....."

Stacey seemed to withdraw under the questions and comments. He bowed his head,
appearing traumatized, while tears flowed down his face. As we agreed, I went over to comfort him, then asked Mary why she was so angry?

"He's ungrateful, I've given him everything..."

Mary became very defensive.. She seemed to have difficulty hearing

Stacey. I asked her had she ever felt oppressed. We talked about oppression, sexism, and if she had ever felt oppressed as a woman, and if so, how did that make her feel.

"I'm Black. Am I? Of course I've felt oppressed."

"How about as a woman? Have you felt oppressed or mistreated by men because you are female?

After pausing Mary said, "Yes of course. That's why I ain't with no man now. "

"How did you feel while being oppressed or mistreated for being a woman?"

"What's your point? I know you ain't comparing being a woman to this mess, to being a homosexual?"

"I'm trying to get your understanding of oppression. I think I can get that understanding by learning about your relationship to oppression."

"All women have felt oppressed by men. But I ain't taking no stuff from no man."

"But you have felt oppressed by men for being a woman?"

"Yes I have!"

"Mary, my intent was never to get you to accept this "mess" as you call it. I think it can be difficult to accept something you really don't understand. So that's not my goal here. What I hope to do is to get you both to see how you contribute to the conflict between each other. Also I want you, Mary, to consider how you might be oppressing Stacey, as those men did who oppressed you. Oppression, judging Stacey and name-calling, words like sissy and fag will not make him change for the better. The best that can do is isolate him and or cause him to rebel. It also totally destroys the possibility for you to communicate and to really understand each other."

"I guess I was raised differently. I guess I'm old fashion. I just don't agree with this mess!!"

"What about the name calling?"

"Where I'm from that's what they call homosexuals"

"Have you ever been called a bitch Mary?" Cause where I'm from women are often referred to as bitches, and I still don't think it's right! Do you?

"You are comparing the wrong things, mister."

"I don't think so. I'm talking about name calling and how destructive it can be, particularly between relatives, or anybody. I only asked you the bitch question because you implied that you called Stacey names like punk because that's what they did to homosexuals where you come from. My point was that doesn't mean it's right, and as you can see, it hasn't helped you and Stacey one bit. Would you agree?

After a short pause Mary says, "You got a good point there."

"Stacey, I've heard you call your grandmother names too." What made you do that to your grandmother?"

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry." He's says crying.

"I believe you are sorry, but help us, help your grandmother to understand why you did it."

"Because I was frustrated and she never listens to me. It's always a fight. I need her. I have no where else to go. When she calls me names..... I just get to the point where I can't take it anymore. I'm sorry grandma."

"I apologize too, Stacey, for hurting you. I love you. I just don't understand this gay stuff."

They go to each other and embrace.

"Well Mary, if you want information and support on how to be more understanding of Stacey's way of loving we provide that type of support here at AMASSI. And Stacey, we have support here for you too. I'd like you both to come back and see me a few more times. Things don't change over night. Society can be a negative influence and could have you back at each other's throats. I already see some growth because you are listening to and respecting each other. This is good. But before you leave and make your next appointment I have a question for you both. What do you both need from each other to help you to get along better? Mary?

"Well..... I just need us to talk more. I need Stacey to be in the house at a decent hour and I still have concerns about how he dresses. I don't know if I'll ever accept that. I need him to respect me as his elder, his grandmother.

"That's very reasonable I think. Earlier when I mentioned that Stacey and I discussed his concerns outside, your response was "He has concerns?" as if you couldn't imagine he had them. He's sixteen, a very smart 16 with a life that's been difficult. He's a young Black man, who is attracted to other men intimately and romantically. How could he be all of this and not have concerns? It's apparent that you have concerns too, Mary. And you know what? You both have a right to your concerns. I think that if you both honored---I didn't say agreed with---but honored each others voice, things would be better between you two."

"You are right about the concern stuff. But because of today I do realize he's growing up and deserves some respect and consideration also. He has been through a lot for a child. That's what I know now. If anything else comes up, I'll let you know."

We all smile at each other.

"Stacey? What about you?"

He pauses, then giggles saying, "I don't know. I feel so much better. I don't want to mess things up. Uh.... I just don't want to be called fag anymore. I want to get along with my grandmother. She's all I got." He begins crying again. "I don't know what else to say. I'll try not to call her names anymore too. That's all I have to say for now."

"OK" I say. "You both have my number. Don't hesitate to call whenever you need to talk. Stacey, I would like to see you tomorrow to talk about something I think you'll find helpful. It has to do with health information about AIDS/HIV and getting you hooked up with people your age for your support. Mary, because he's under, 18 I need your consent. Do I have it?

"..... Yes"

"OK. My secretary has the paperwork. Also you can see him to make your appointments for next week, OK?

"OK, Cleo. I'm glad I came here. I have a lot to think about. Thank you. I'm very appreciative." says Mary.

"Me too, Cleo." responded Stacey. I can't believe this place is here." He's runs over and hugs me. "Thanks Cleo."

"You both are welcome. We are doing our job. That's our responsibility. Now you both go make your appointment for next week. And you, mister, I'll see you tomorrow."

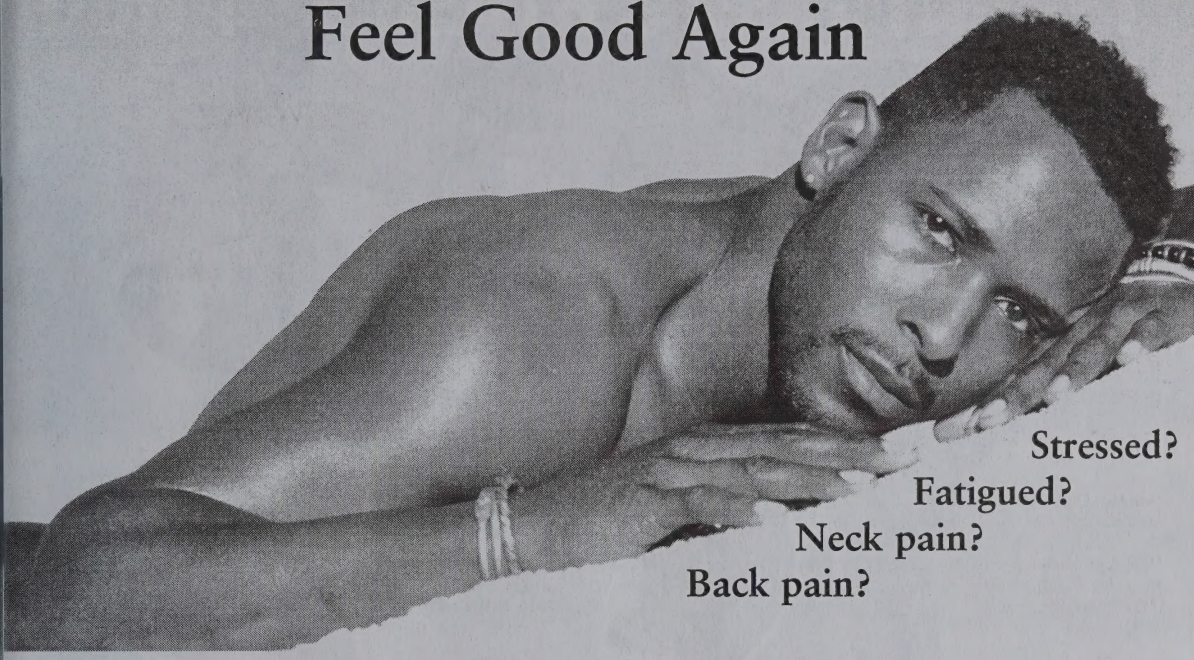
Stacey and Mary did keep their appointments every week. At each session it was apparent that a positive bond was developing between them. After a few days Stacey toned down his seductive clothing. His pants weren't so tight and he changed his hair (that was my idea). He still stayed out too late on weekends for his grandmother's taste, but overall things had definitely changed for the better between them. Stacey found reasons to hang out at AMASSI almost everyday. Mary donated money to AMASSI and even brought me a plate of food, unsolicited, a few times.

The AMASSI Center is located in the Los Angeles area of Inglewood, a predominately African-American community. For more information and a brochure, call 310-419-1969. To visit AMASSI on the Internet the address is http://www.amassi.com or by e-mail AMASSICTR@aol.com. Cleo can be contacted at AMASSI or by e-mail at cleo@amassi.com.

Harambe

Cleo Manago
(my web pages are back, with new stuff. check it out!!
Dial - http://home.earthlink.net/~blkembrace/)
/\/\/\

Feel Good Again



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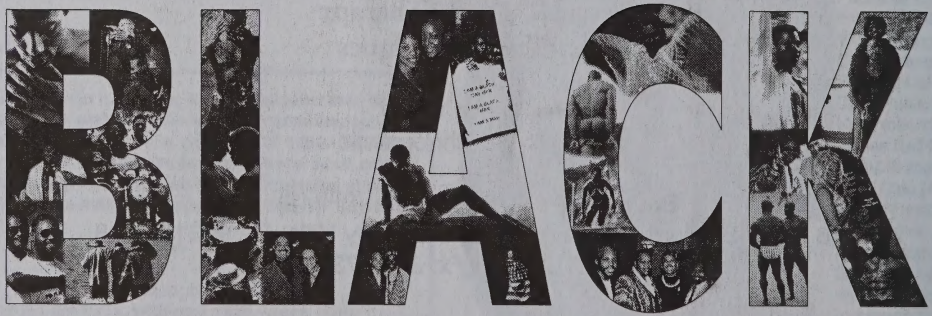

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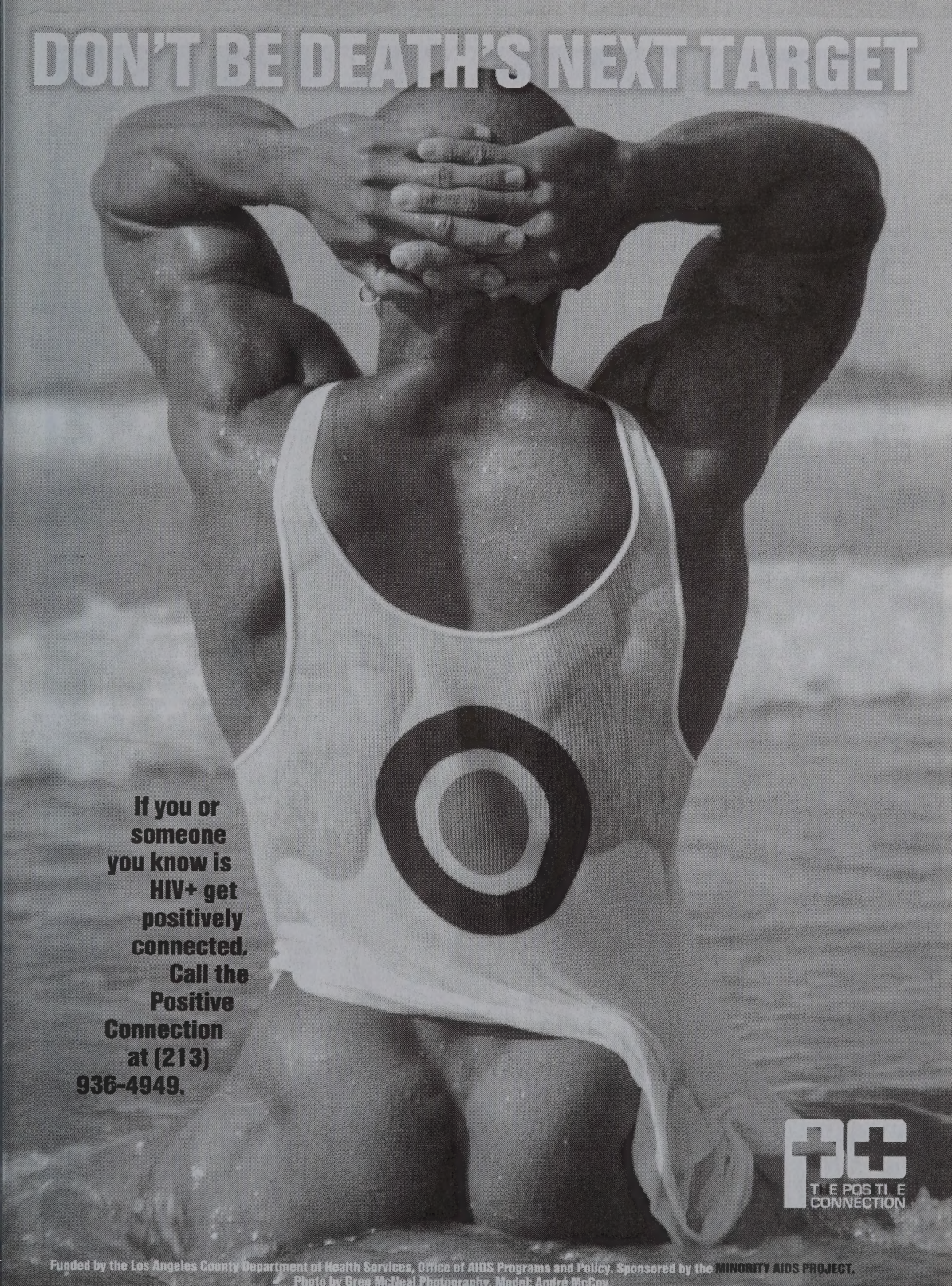
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THE SOUND OF ANN NESBY'S BLACKNESS

a David Shawn Hill interview

Her rich and passionate voice is an instrument of truth that powered the Grammy-winning, much acclaimed Africentric musical group "Sounds of Blackness". She is the sister-mother-daughter blackfolk know so well who, like Patti, will just as soon feed you black eyed peas, collared greens, hugs and kisses and admonitions on the same platter with her own deep dish sounds that are blackened beautifully by warm fires emanating from deep within her soul.

She's a solo act now, and her debut solo album, "I'm Here For You" once again proves that Ann Nesby's got the chops. And they ain't just pork. SBC Music Editor, David Shawn Hill, recently found that out , and much more, when he caught up with Mother Ann in New Orleans where she was, typically, hanging with family, and he'd be the first to tell you that a conversation with her is a conversation with your own black self. So he invites you to enjoy as much as he did.
---SBC

DAVID SHAWN HILL: What were you trying to say through your work with "Sounds of Blackness"?

ANN NESBY: One of the main goals was to encourage and enlighten and to educate through our form of music, singing the entire idiom of African American music, from an African American point of view, unapologetically. Our music is at the root of so many types of music. Almost all music uses some of those West African beats, and so many times our music has been taken and we've not been credited, like in the cases where people are being called 'The King of Rock & Roll', 'The King of Blues', and all that.

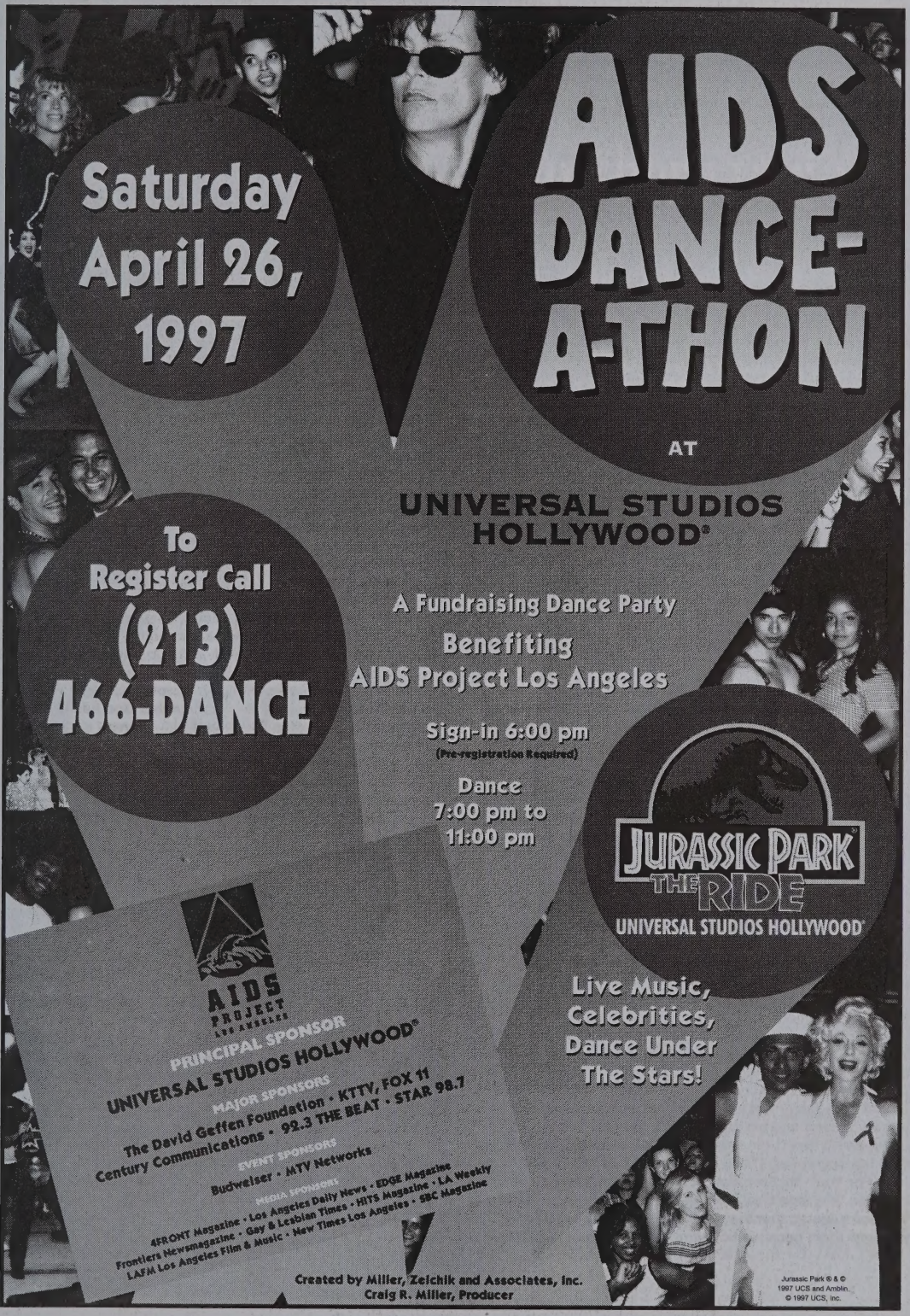
"Sounds of Blackness" was a group that stood for African American music. In fact, Gospel was a music that people really weren't respecting for what it's truly worth, and they weren't giving it it's rightful place in the world of art. The music is there to serve the community, so we do functions, go into the schools and clubs and gay bars and sing and teach about the richness of our heritage unapologetically.

I always say that Jesus was a man who went where there was a need because The Bible says: "Those that are whole need not a physician." So when people talk to you about, "How can you sing this kind of music, go into clubs and sing this music? How can you go into the gay clubs and sing?" I say 'because everybody needs to be encouraged. God looks on the heart and man looks on the outward appearance. Everybody needs to be encouraged. If a song can uplift your day, if a song can inspire you, what I'm suppose to do is use my God-given gift to sing and bring it to you.

On your new project, what was it like working with Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis?

They were a pleasure. First of all, they were first class human beings; real brothers who are concerned about their community and giving back to the community, and that, first and foremost, stood out in my mind.

When I got there, they were very encouraging, the atmosphere was always very relaxed and comfortable. They always encouraged the artist to write because they knew that writing would be the lifeline for an artist, and their children's children would be able to enjoy that money from writing for years to come. You see, so many times in years past, some of the pioneer artists were tricked out of that money, but with Jam and Lewis, having been on both sides of the fence as artists, producers and now owners of their own record company, they're able and willing and committed to educating young black artist and telling them how to go about establishing themselves in the business. So it was a great plus to be able to have them there as producers and to be able to ---well, they never said they were critiquing, but they would let the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artists express themselves freely, then they would say things like "Well, let me add this to it. I think it's wonderful, but let's add this thing here." And then they would tell you why they added it. And it makes you feel good because you know you're learning something from two of the top producers in the country.

And what they are actually adding affiliates with the words you've already written.

Absolutely.

As far as your solo career is concerned, it took awhile to finally get a solo album out. How long have you been considering this solo move?

Well when "Sounds of Blackness" signed its deal with Jam and Lewis I signed a solo deal. And with the success God has blessed "Sounds of Blackness" with , we were constantly trying to figure out when to do the Ann Nesby thing, but you know the old saying: "If it ain't broke don't fix it." So it was after "Sounds of Blackness" slowed down a bit, then Jam and Lewis decided to do the Ann Nesby thing.

You know, I'm originally from Detroit and I was at The State Theater last year, and that was the first time I saw "Sounds of Blackness" live. I believe it was a Terry Lewis-affiliated concert.

Oh yes! That was one of the first shows with that album.

Well I was mesmerized.

Oh Really!

Yeah. And you did a lot of solos at that concert.

You know how you do an album and you don't really know all the songs as well as you do as you go along? Well we were kind of feeling through things at that time, but I enjoyed it. I really enjoyed it, but I always enjoy Detroit because I know that Detroit is a town that appreciates music because they've produced such great musical talents.

Listening to your album, there's a definite gospel ring to a lot of the songs. What motivated that?

My motto is 'Always put God first and everything else will fall in line.' So when I began to pray about what I wanted to sing about--I never want to just sing about something that has no meaning and is not going to be encouraging or helpful---it came to me to do the album on relationships, so in writing about relationships I knew I had to touch on the emotional, the physical and the spiritual. We had to talk about unconditional love, talk about letting your word be your bond, talk about maintaining a relationship; man's relationship with his mate and man's relationship with platonic friends. And of course talk about the ultimate relationship which is man's relationship with God. So, there was no way that I could bridge that wide range just doing straight gospel because when you talk about man and his mate there's love involved in more ways than one. There's the heart-to-heart love and physical love and then the emotional. That's why I did songs like "I'll Do Anything For You" that represents unconditional love, and "If You Love Me Why Don't You Tell Me" which is about how to maintain relationships so that they don't go bad; how to tell your mate that you love them because so many times relationships fall apart

because people aren't always wise enough to tell their mate that they love them. They assume that they know. But something that minor can cause a relationship to fall apart.

And then there's the song "I'm Still Wearing Your Name" which is about the ultimate doom in relationships which is divorce. Children are affected, families are effected. Sometimes women, when they divorce, feel like life can't go on, so in my mind, I wanted to say, hey, just because you're divorce doesn't mean that your life isn't through. So many times people end up in divorce because people aren't with the mate that God has ordained for them, but , if you keep living, and pull yourself up and build your self-esteem, you can find somebody else and go on with your life.

As I listened to your lyrics what struck me was the conversational quality of them. They're very simple, yet, very bottom line deep. I can almost see the hand jesters and everything. They're very direct.

That was my hope, that people would get it.

Last week I had a party and I played your CD to get people's reaction, and I knew the reaction that I was going to get. There was a lot of 'Alright! Sing it, girl!'

Great! That's really great!

Tell me about the stage musical you were working with "Sing Hallelujah!"

"Sing Hallelujah!" was a gospel cabaret that consisted of 44 songs and there was choreography to every song. And yes, (laughing) I had to dance! When I was first called and asked to do it, I told them that I'd never danced before, but I told them that I'd try, and if God gives me the grace, I'll sure sing the hell out of 'em.

That must have been really interesting for you.

Oh yeah. It was the first theatre I'd done since school. We did that first show at the Playhouse-In-The-Round in Cincinnati and a

(continued on page 45)

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DAVE'S RHYTHM KITCHEN

by
David Shawn Hill, Music Editor

Aretha Franklin
The Early Years
(Columbia)

Aretha Franklin's most eclectic collection of bittersweet love songs recently found it's way back in record stores all over the world in this remastered compact disk.

In this classic collection, listeners have an opportunity to appreciate the lush,
sophisticated professionalism of her early 1960's recordings at Columbia, even though. critics and public alike dismissed this work as

derivative,overly orchestrated, and inappropriate to the young 24 year old singer's talent, obviously not realizing Ms. Aretha was not one to be pigeonholed. This vintage masterpiece proves that she was then and is today The Queen; O.K !!!!!!!!!

"Drinking Again", a Dinah Washington cover, dominates the album with blazing vocals, desperate lyrics, and Ms. thing yodeling like she's right in the First
Ebenezar Baptist Church of Nutbush, Tennessee!!!!!!! "I ain't got nothin but a bottle of
Seagrams Gin and just a memory" concludes the song with more power than the famous Chattanooga Choo Choo."This Bitter Earth" , the CD's first single and another Dinah Washington, slowly brings anyone with a heart to tears as Aretha May (that's what her friends call her) spills her guts on her prophetically bitter love life.

The Early Years also contains three excellent examples of Franklin's trip into classic R&b. Her cover of "Walk On By" displays a lighter, cooler and less melodramatic delivery than Dionne Warwick's original, but does explode at the end.

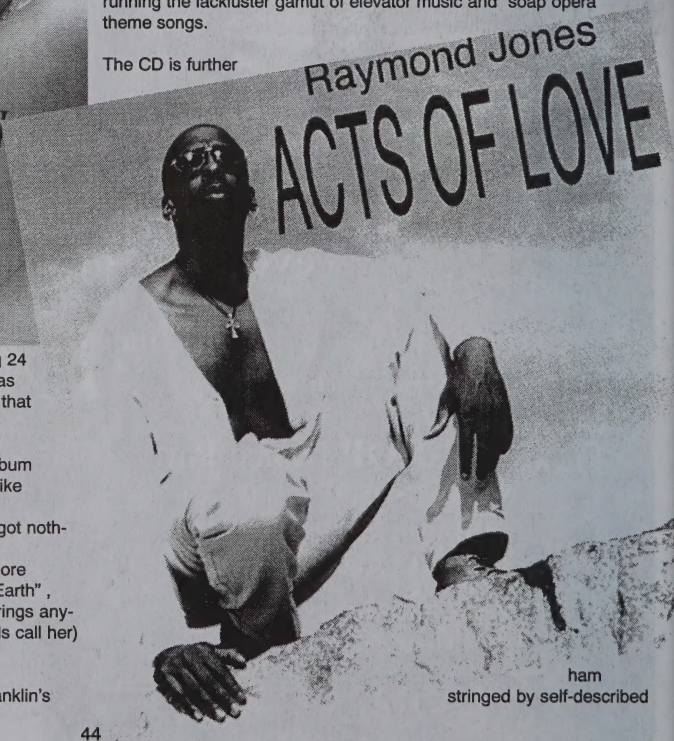
A more socially conscious Aretha sings to save the world on her version of "Take A Look", and delivers "Nobody Knows How I Feel This Morning" with a bluesy flare.

This may not be the Aretha most people know, but with this classic display of song and someone so young who could sing such angry,sad love with such
conviction is amazing to the ear!!*****

Raymond Jones
Acts of Love
(UEG)

Raymond Jones, who, as a composer, augmented Spike Lee films with such songs as "Harlem Blues" ("Mo Better Blues"), "People In Search of A New Life" ("Clockers") and "Be Alone Tonight ("School Daze") has nobly put together a collage of songs designed to explore the positive vibes of love. Given his stellar track record and the lovely title "Acts Of Love" , our expectations are high, however, what we are given are lyrics that are down right weak and musical arrangements running the lackluster gamut of elevator music and soap opera theme songs.

The CD is further

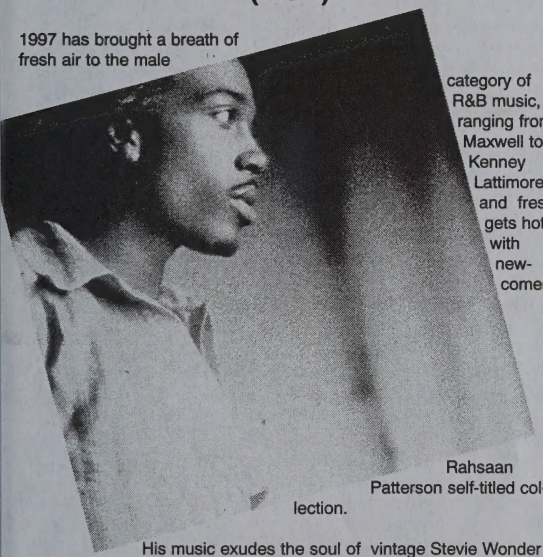


ham
stringed by self-described

poetry that has little to do with poetry and more to do with high school love notes. Now don't get me wrong , some songs do rise above the muck and mire of the mundane, thanks to some occasional soaring vocals by Portia Griffen ("She Ain't Gonna Leave You") and the isolated rhythmic appeal of Michael Alford's arrangements on "Give Up The Love".

Yes, Raymond Jones searches for love through an array of songs but runs into potholes with repetitive beats, awkward rap inserts and those damn poems! It just ain't happening.**

Rasheen Patterson
Rasheen Patterson
(MCA)



1997 has brought a breath of fresh air to the male category of R&B music, ranging from Maxwell to Kenney Lattimore, and fresh gets hot with new-comer Rahsaan Patterson self-titled collection.

His music exudes the soul of vintage Stevie Wonder and Chaka Khan, his obvious vocal influences, and blends it with a modern day sensibility. From "Stop By" to "Come Over", the music flows like a gentle brook, and the live percussions, jazzy strings and the violin arrangement on "Spend The Night", gives his music natural, deep rooted romantic soul.

Vocally, Patterson erupts with each and every single, displaying that a male recording artist has the same liberation a female diva has without moaning and growling like a damn grizzly bear.

Another must hear-song, "Can We Wait A Minute", has a violin arrangement that will soften the hardest heart.

A singer who possesses a voice that is both poetic and powerful, and who is man enough to get into with his sensitive female side, Rahsaan Patterson is worthy of keeping both an eye and an ear on. ****

(Ann Nesby continued from page)

scout came in, saw the play, and took it to off-Broadway. So we ended up at the famous Village Gate Theater in New York for about 6 months. That's the theater where all of the greats like Clara Ward performed. So it's like if you make it through the Village Gate then you've done something. So I was very proud of that. And then, after that came "Sounds of Blackness". I had been a part of the James Cleveland Gospel Music Workshop prior to doing theatre, and that's how I met Donald Lawrence, the director of "Sing Hallelujah". The Gospel Music Workshop is a great platform for starting artist because it allows them to show their abilities, and for others to hear them and use them in other things.

Back to your album. From what I could tell, the title track, "I'm Here For You" , was very personal, written for someone you know.

Unconditional love is when you love regardless. Because The Bible says that loves covers a multitude of sins. You know their faults and you're willing to step in and be their friend when they're weak. In my case, this song was for a friend who was diagnosed with AIDS. You know, a lot of times people are ignorant on how to work with people who have AIDS, and they're afraid, they don't know what to do, they're afraid of contracting---so, in essence, they walk away from them and leave them there lonely. A lot of people have passed on because of the loneliness and the broken heart faster than they would have normally had there been somebody who loved them and stood by them. And I did not want that to be my case [with my friend] because I searched myself and knew that my love for him was unconditional then, and it is now. He's got whatever he needs from me. That's what that song is about, not having to worry about whether I was going to be there, just knowing that I will always be right there by his side---whatever he needs, whatever I can do. "I'm Here For You" is one of my favorite songs. And what we've decided to do is donate a portion of the proceeds from that single to the Minority AIDS Foundation.

I also noticed on the album that there were a few up tempo, 'housey' kind of tunes, particularly "Hold on" which I've been hearing in the clubs.

Yes! Yes! That's the new single! "Can I Get A Witness" and "This Weekend" are going to be released as singles too.

And those are going to really be pushed hard on the club scene. Now do you actually perform in dance clubs?

Oh yes! Actually I did all the Club performances for "Sounds of Blackness" including L.A.'s Catch One.

So what's next for you Ann Nesby?

There's a possibility that I might do some theatre again. I've had several offers to do shows like "Smokey Joe's Cafe'", but I've been on the road so much I haven't had a chance to do much of anything else right now, but I'm sure there'll come a time when the album is not being played and I'll be in the studio working on the new one, that I'll be able to do some more theatre in between. Because you know the story about starving artist. It's either feast or famine. So I'm sure I'll be doing something that I love to pay the bills.

FLESH & FANTASY

fiction by Vernon Clay

The first time I saw Pearson was in a photograph of a friend's party. He wasn't the initial center of the photo; my friends David and Mark were, smiling a drunk grin with Styrofoam cups filled with rum & coke in their hands. But there was Pearson, standing in the background, talking to some useless queen with her run-of-the-mill hazel eyes on. I say she was useless because he wasn't talking to me.

I don't really know if his name was Pearson, but for some reason I call him that because it sounds like such a soap opera name, like Maverick or Trevor or Brandon. The truth is I've never met Pearson, but that was soon to change. Very soon indeed.

Our lives crossed with that photo. He was a brown skinned man, very strong jaws, a cleft in his stubble covered chin, and dimples to die for. That photo revealed a man of great sexuality as well as sensuality. He had thick lips, soft and inviting. He had broad shoulders and a powerful chest that demanded to be seen in the black spandex top he'd worn, with nipples that stood at attention. I fell in love with that photo, running my fingers across the slick surface, imagining the flesh against mine. Yes, he was that captivating, that seductive, that fyne!

Our paths crossed again, this time across the crowded dance floor of the Catch One Disco. The music seemed to stop as I noticed him walking across the floor dressed in tight jeans that did little for the imagination, with his pronounced package out front and a round rear that demanded attention. I wanted to talk to him, but was deathly afraid of rejection. What if he didn't like me? What if he liked tall men like himself, rising to a height of at least six-foot three? I was out of the league at a stupefying five-foot seven. There were too many what-ifs, so I just admired him from afar.

I watched him dance, the muscles in his legs popping forth with erotic overtures. He wore a midriff T-shirt, and all his stomach muscles pressed forward from behind his tight flesh to produce a six-pack Coors would be proud of. His skin was smooth, the tiniest hint of hair coming from his sternum which was encased by a pair of mighty pecs. Even his hands stood out, with their map of robust veins that swelled across the back; manly hands they were.

I often thought of Pearson as I lay up at nights listening to Leno's monologue of the day, visualizing what I may have in the refrigerator to snack on. I would imagine us at a swank party, ties & tails, picking at the hors d'oeuvres trailing by us on trays of silver carried by men of gold. He would talk to me, his tone very strong, very baritone, smiling at me with teeth of perfectionary whiteness. I would just stare into his pupils, transfixed by his intelligent conversation and snappy wit. He is captivated by me, his appeal of shorter men fulfilled by yours truly. We undress each other with our eyes. I, seeing him in all his fleshly wonder. The roundness of his chest, the width of his shoulders, the thickness of his thighs, the thinness of his waist. I take it all in like a cool drink of lemonade. He is the one, girlfriend, from follicle to cuticle.

Many times, as I stand in the tub, water cascading across my smooth flesh, trickling tiny drops from my appendages, I think of Pearson. I can feel him standing behind me, chest against back, knee against thigh, manhood against tush. He wraps his arms around me, pressing me unto his body, encasing me like a caterpillar's cocoon in his carnal embrace. He begins to make love to me, as if we were long time lovers reunited again. It's slow at first, very sensual, very exciting and passion-filled. I can feel the intertwining of pain and pleasure, love and lust, flesh and fantasy. He is a god, spilling words of lecherous delight into my ear like wine from a pitcher. Then I explode into a river of lust, each globule twisting within the water, falling into the drain, my ecstasy spent.

Soon imagination met reality, and Pearson and I were to actually meet. The backdrop; the cruisy surroundings of a local park that shall remain nameless. It was late, and the vultures were out in droves on this Saturday night. My eye caught many a man that evening, their look intense enough to burn a hole through my loins. Shadowed faces with drunken smiles and eager lips. The sounds of heavy breathing and ruffling clothes beneath dimmed lamp lights. The voyeur in me enjoys this place. To see the sight of men engaging in the "quickie" always excited me. There was the sense of no shame, and fast eroticism that came with the meeting of each couple. Filled mouths and willing buns, rushing in a frenzy of groping hands and a blur of introductions to reach a sensation that only lasted a second. A fool's paradise it was.

This is where I saw Pearson, leaning back on a park bench, the amber glow of a cigarette fixed limply between his fingers. I caught his eye before he caught mine. "Pssst!" he exclaimed, grabbing my attention. I glanced in his direction casually before actually seeing who he was. When I did recognize him, my heart felt as though it had shot into my throat and I found it so hard to breathe.

Thump! Thump! Thump! My ears echoed to the sound. He grinned at me, the look strained, as if his mouth were performing a task his brain was unaware of. He beckoned me again, and I found my feet suddenly weighed a ton. He was looking fine as ever, as my eyes adjusted to the image.. He wore a tank-top and shorts, the latter hugging his thighs like a leach to

a vein. His thick tool seemed to grow steadily against his leg, threatening to go beyond the boundaries of his shorts. I felt as if I were going to faint.

I slid beside him on the bench, and his grin widened, emitting a sting of alcohol that was so strong that I had to hold my nose shut. It didn't matter because I was hypnotized by his incredible stare which placed me in a quickening trance. He eased closer to me, placing a hand on my thigh. Then he spoke, "Hey, how you doing?"

"Fine," I replied, unable to say more.

"What's your name?" he asked, squeezing my thigh, smiling again.

Something was wrong. I wasn't sure, but I said, "William," and just as I said it, it came to me; his voice! It was different today somehow, a little lower, a bit high.

"William," he repeated, "I like that. My name is Cleavis."

What! I thought. It wasn't Pearson. What happened to Pearson?

Just then Pearson...or is it Cleavis. Like Beavis! Began to nod his head, as if approving of something. "Nice strong thighs," he said, his lips poking forward and his eyes batting. It hinged on the side of feminine. What the hell was going on? I questioned, wondering what had happened to the man I had been with only minutes ago.

I stood to my feet, looking down at this impostor, not believing my eyes, not believing my nose. Invasion of the Body Snatcher was happening right in this very park.

Before I knew it I was trailing back to my car, revving the engine and streaming along the street, my mind in a frenzy. As soon as I reached the confines of my bedroom I sat back and waited until my breathing returned to a civil pace. Cleavis had become the flesh and Pearson was the fantasy. I closed my eyes and slowly undid my zipper. I placed my hand within the warmness of my pouch, soothing my throbbing stiffness. I thought once more of Pearson, his thickness, his deep voice, his manly demeanor, his warm embrace. Cleavis. Who was he if not a stranger? Tonight I would make love to my fantasies.

Tonight I would make love to Pearson.

model: T. Jackson Washington DC

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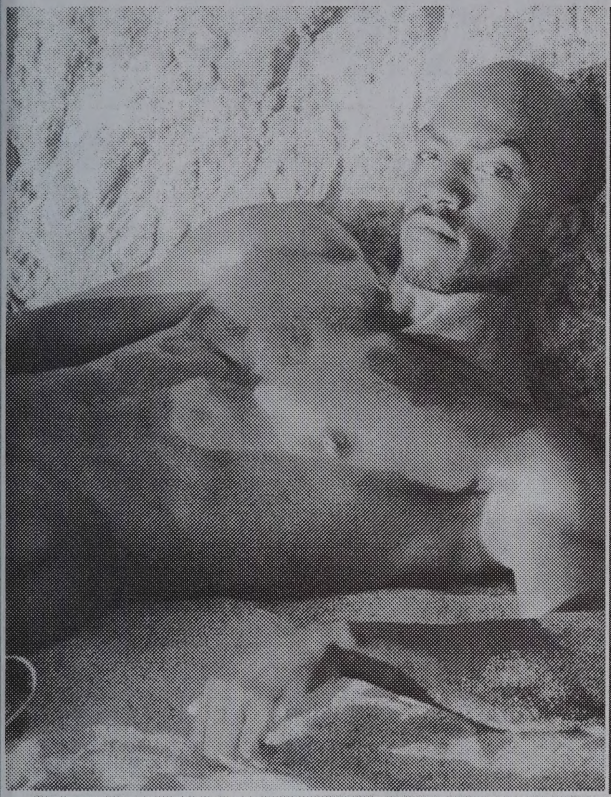

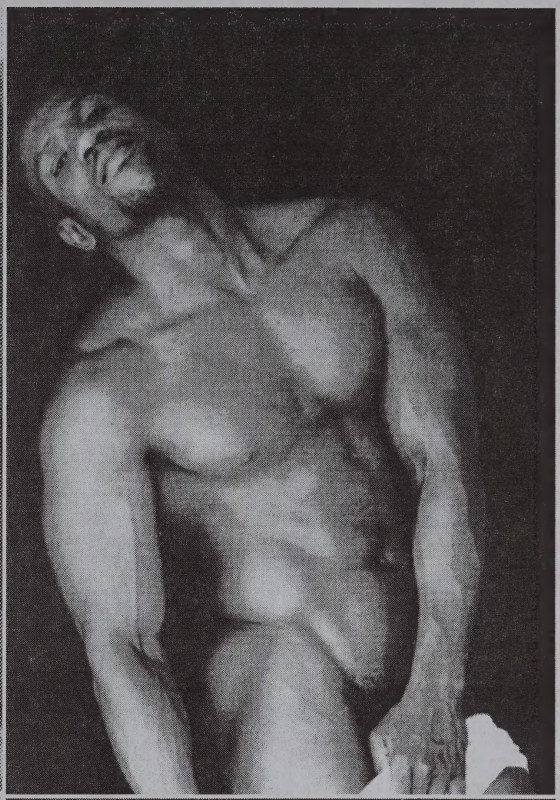

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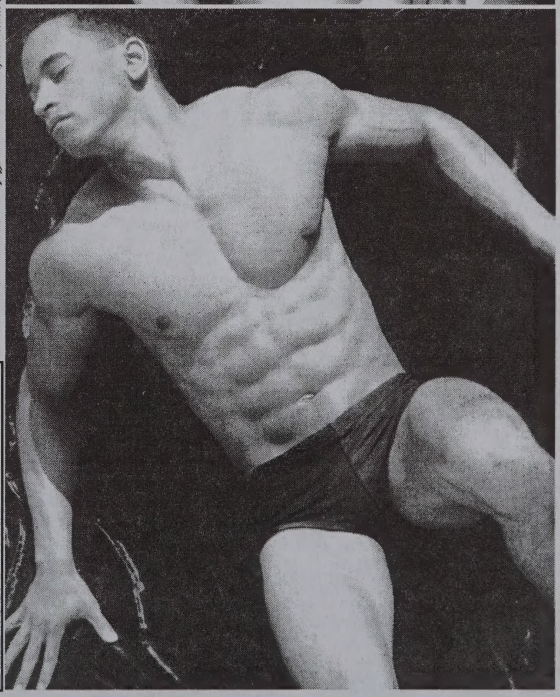

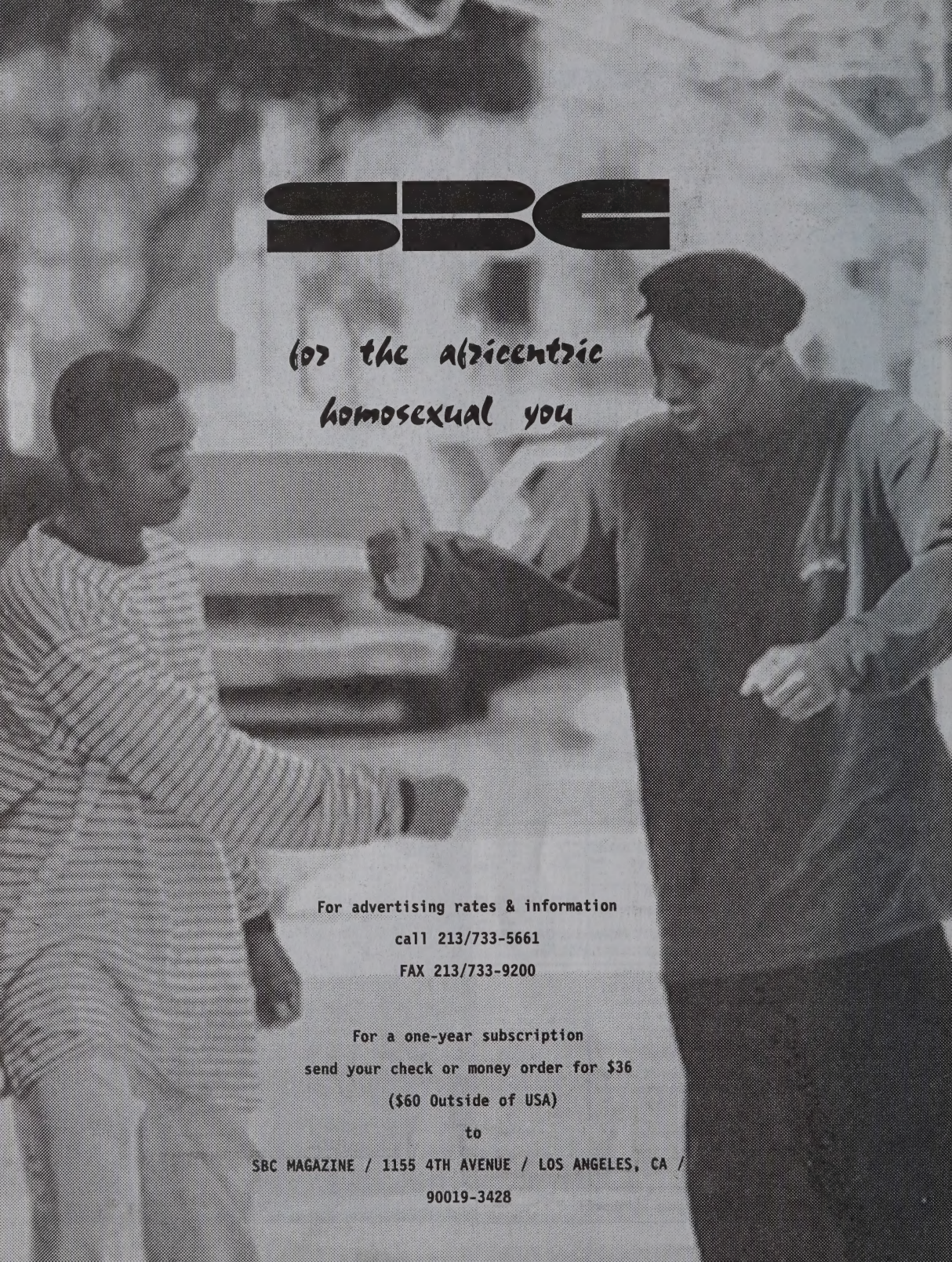

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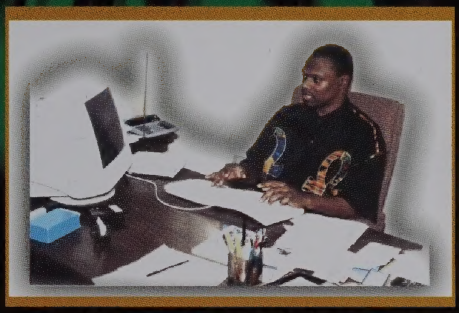

AMASSI's Founder and C.E.O., Cleo Manago

AMASSI STAFF

For your comfort, our counselors, confidantes and supportive staff consists of men and women representing our community's sexual, social and gender diversity. Our focus is to build connections, minimize isolation, misunderstanding, emotional conflicts, sexually transmitted disease (HIV, syphilis, etc.) and related concerns.

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Cleo Manago

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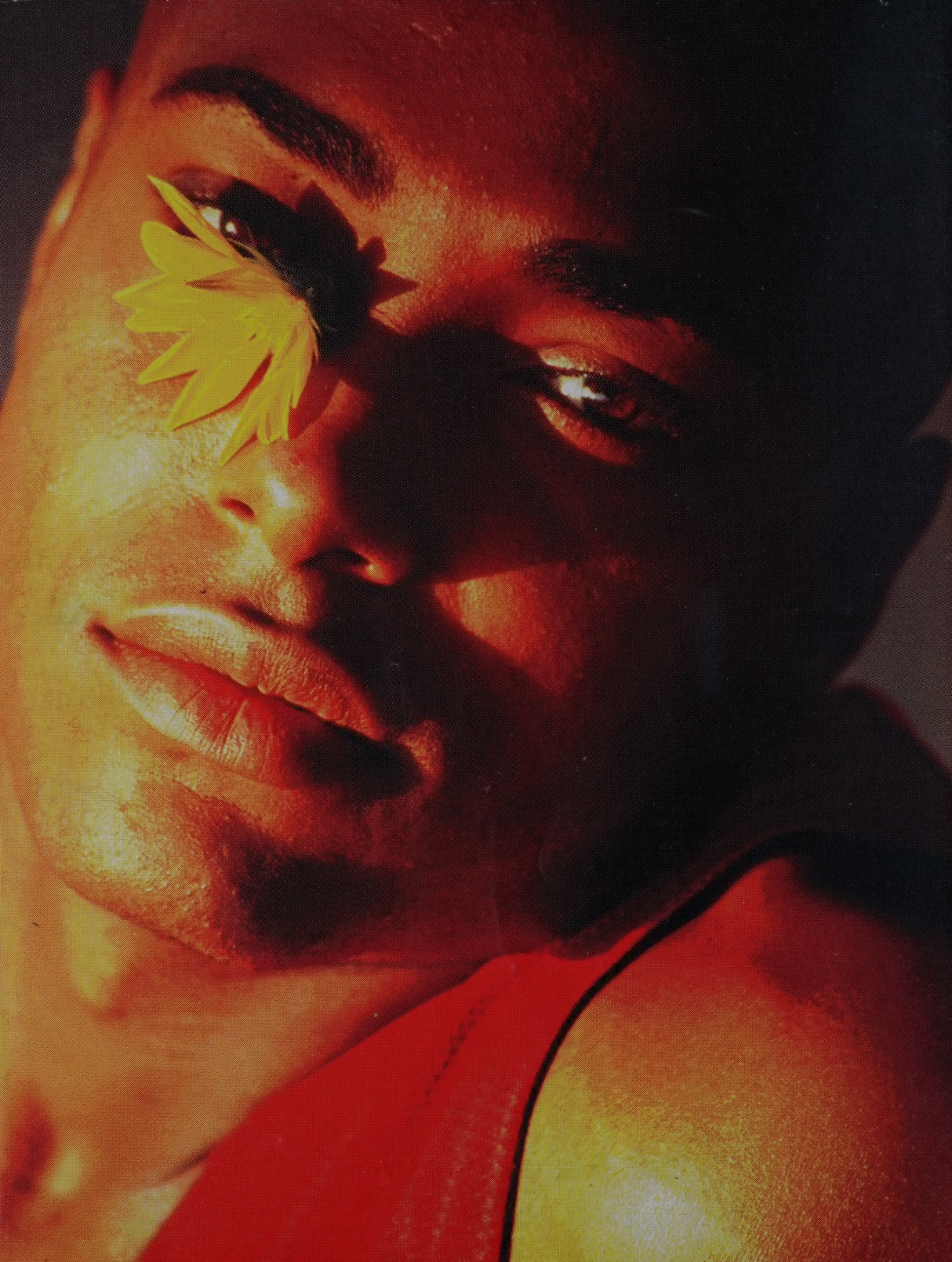

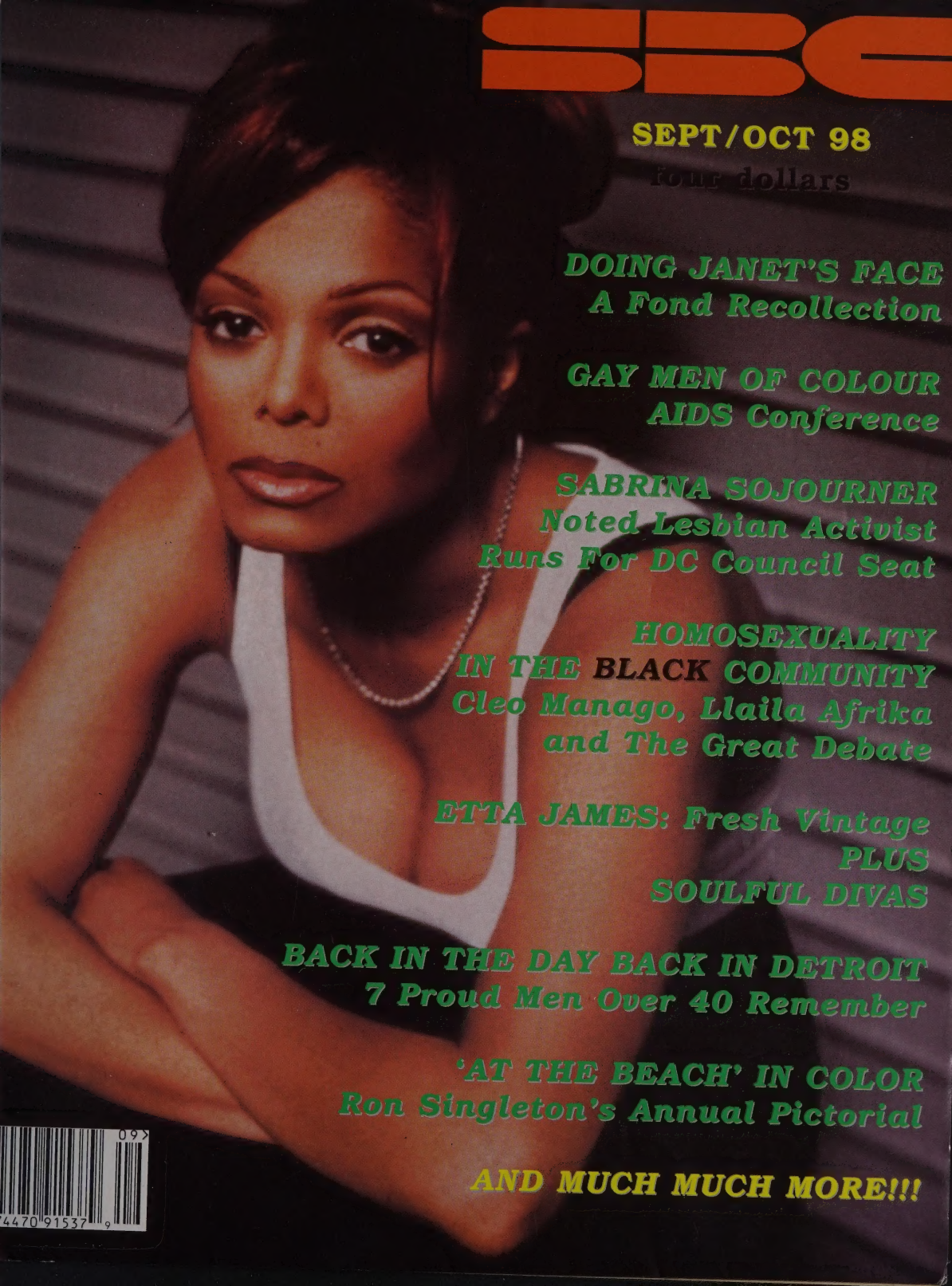

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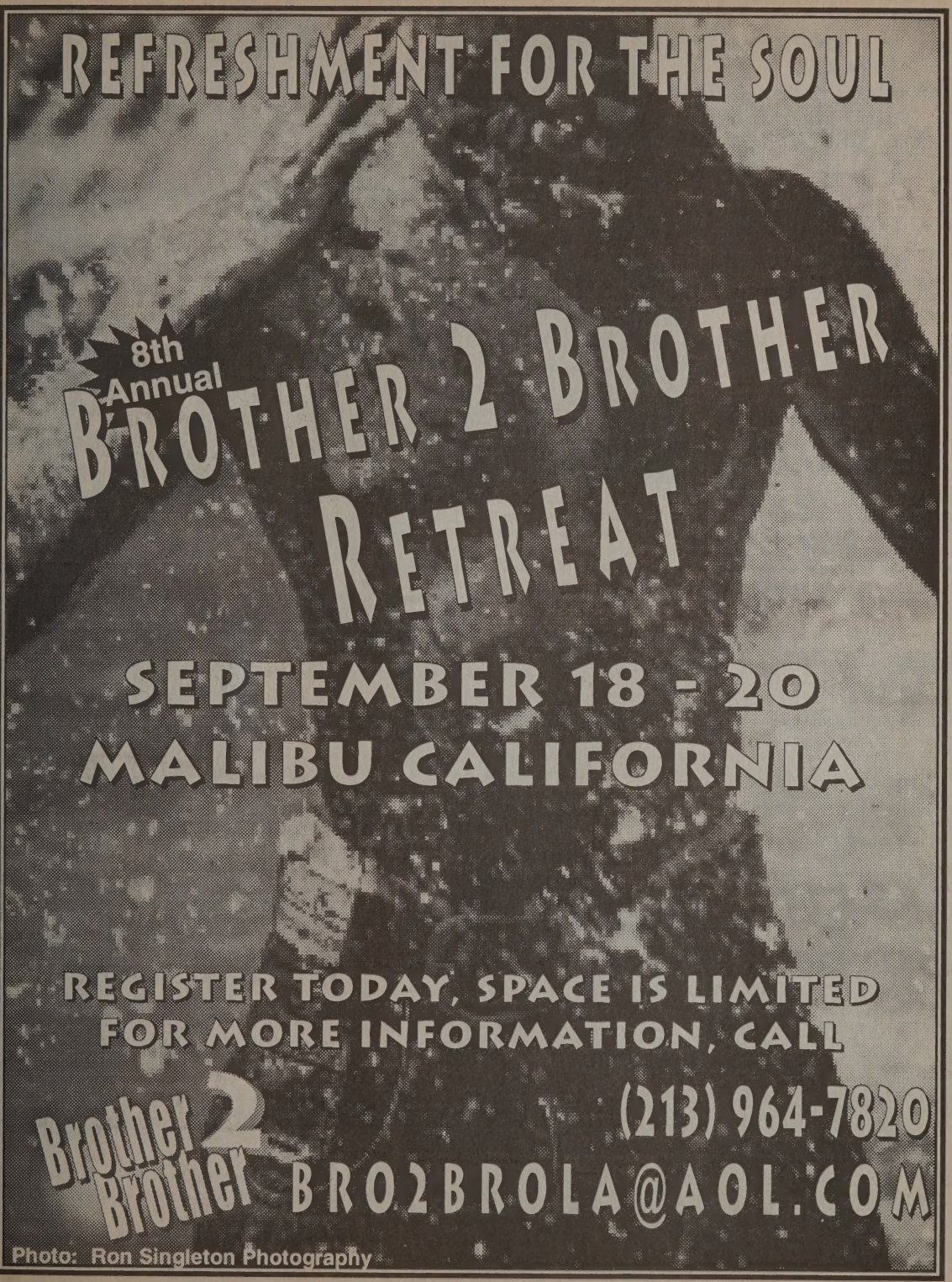
photography by Rene' Elizondo Jr.

on this page
ATB BEACH PARTY REVELERS
photography by Ron Singleton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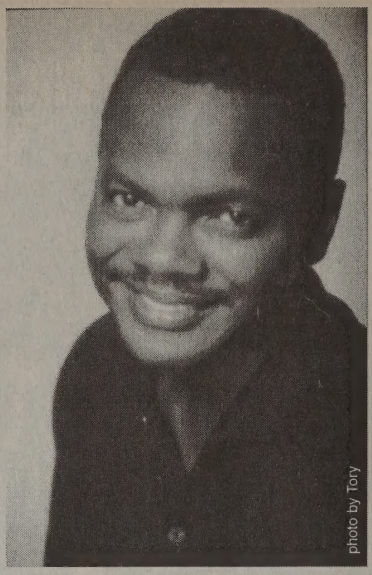

With great excitement and anticipation, I did what many of you did this summer. Attend the family reunion. The Bennett family reunion, held at Point Firmin (which is a Peninsula that looms high and with great drama over the Pacific ocean) in San Pedro, was the bomb! My great Uncle James Bennett, who had just turned 80, had come in from Chicago with his 'new' diva wife of 10 years, could not have stuck his chest out farther or grinned more as he looked over the sea of nieces and nephews and children and cousins and in laws with pride and love and a true sense of being.

And then there was my niece Kelly, my older sister Sandra's oldest daughter. I hadn't seen Kelly in years but my sister had told me that she had grown up to be a proud, down home dignified same gender loving human being. Kelly was everything my sister Sandra had said.

Now living in Oakland, California, Kelly brought her beautiful partner, Tanika, with her. Tanika is an extremely bright sister working on her ph.d at Berkeley. As Tanika looked around at us Bennetts and Clays and Flemings and Clarks and Harlins and Smiths and Meeks and Lees scattered all over the place, she smiled at me with an amazement. "Your family seems to be so accepting," she said to me. And suddenly that gave me pause. I had become so used to my family's acceptance and love and respect that it was merely a given. But as I thought about it, I realized that my family was really not that much different from many other families.

We're just regular down home black folks rooted in Mississippi and dispatched out to Chicago and L.A. and all points in between. As a family, we respect those who respect themselves. Kelly's love of self, my love of self, is something family has taught us. Respect is not a given. It's an earning. I suspect that many who have problems with their families are those who have problems with themselves. How can you expect family to respect you when you don't respect yourself, when you're hiding right out in the open, when you're ashamed of how God made you, when you're ashamed of who you love?

Now, of course, even in our family, there's the occasional brother-in-law who has his problem with who Kelly and I am, but he knows better than to go up against the Bennetts with that bullshit, especially at our family reunion.

So often, when I speak to my mother on the phone, she says the same thing: "I am so fortunate. I have the best kids in the world." And then I think about my dad who passed on a few years ago. He'd drop by, raid my fridge, sit up and shoot the breeze with my friends and me, and before leaving, he'd say: "You know, Bubba, you make the old man proud."

I guess what I really wanted to do was merely take this moment to say: thanks mom, thanks dad, thanks Uncle James, thanks family, for demanding that I be the best of who I am, which is, among everything else, an Africentric Homosexual of dignity!

Stanley Bennett Clay

SBC

The Africentric Homosexual Magazine
published bi-monthly

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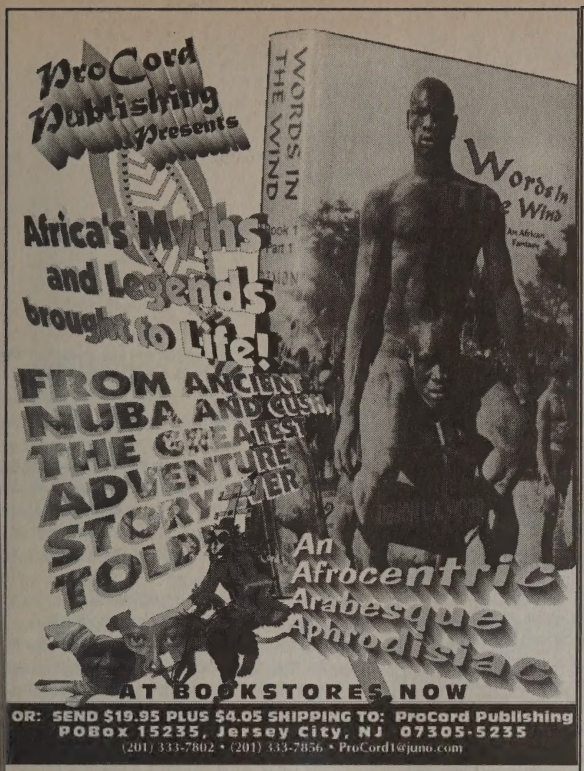
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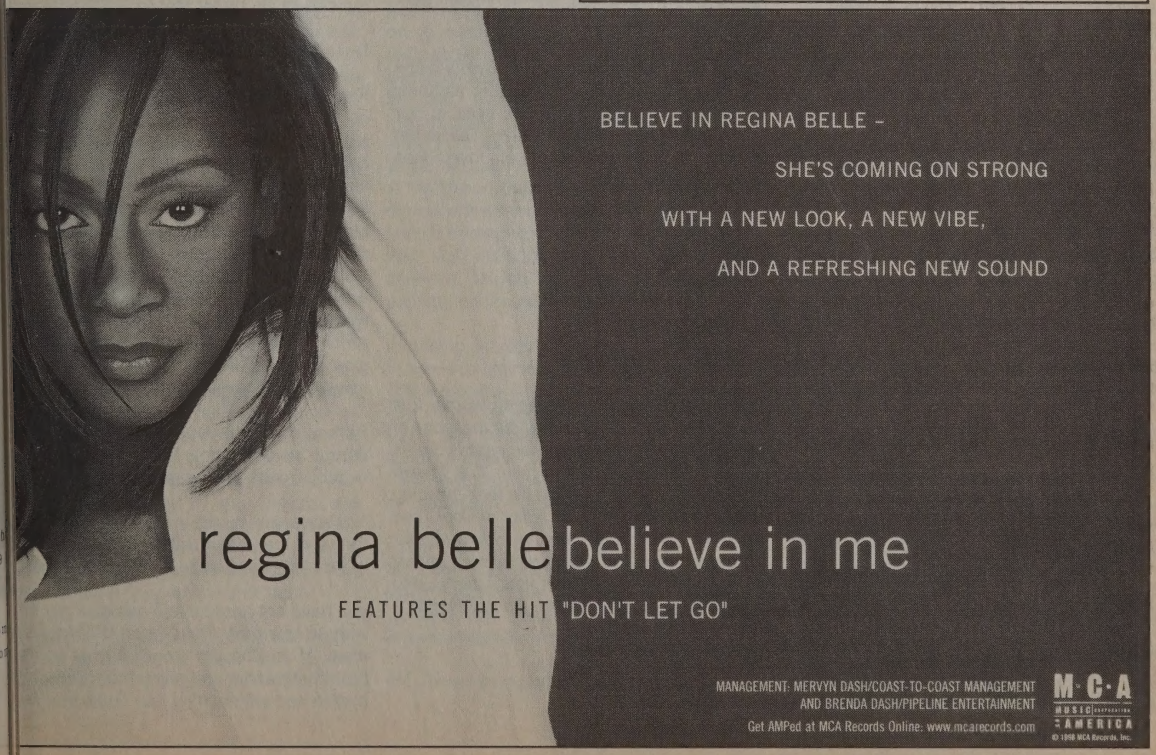
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Letters

TOUCHED BY 'THE MOURNING'

Stanley,

First of all, I enjoy your magazine and I support you very much, not just because you're a brother, but because you are a very talented black man.

I've received your "July 98" issue and, first, the cover itself was breathtaking. I think you should have a contest for couples to win a trip to these gay beach parties or anything. The article "The Mourning After" by Wayne Orlando Byrd moved me emotionally because I still have that Valentine issue (Vol. 5 Issue 2 Feb. 96) with him and Carlos (on the cover) and I always thought that they were the best couple. My heart goes out deeply to Wayne and I wish him well. If I could, Stanley, I wish that there was a way to reach Wayne, just as a friend. It took a lot of courage to write what he did, and I find comfort in writing also. I'm an HIV positive that has been through a lot. Writing kept me from going crazy. If you want to give Wayne my address, feel free to.

I'm also proud of the mother's coming out story ("Dear Son: Coming Out To The Family" by Debra L. Rogers).

Keep up the good work!

Darren Johnson
Kansas City Missouri

Gentlemen,

Wayne Orlando Byrd's moving story of the loss of his partner, Reverend Carlos Anthony Jones, touched my heart profoundly ("The Mourning After: Moving Beyond the Loss", Vol. 7 Issue 2). His story is my story. I'm sure it is many others' story also. I lost my partner of 20 years to AIDS some five years ago.

Reading his words brought me to tears, even after five years of my own loss. Mr. Byrd's shared experience went beyond the mere facts of the loss, but was a heartfelt, eloquent and deep expression of what all of us have felt after such a separation. Line by line I followed his words and, with few exceptions, this could easily be my own story.

The pain of loss, the struggle to create new meaning in life, the pangs of guilt upon venturing into a possible new relationship, and the long periods of confusion and pain---all of these he so simply and honestly expressed. Mr. Byrd, thank you for your words and the opportunity for me and others to see a public expression of the deepest parts of ourselves. Know that your time and effort DOES HELP the rest of us. Although after five years following the loss of my own partner my life is going very well, there are still days of struggle, haunting memories, and temporary periods of emptiness.

Reading stories like that of Mr. Byrd's helps me know that we CAN, day by day, find new meaning in life and live those lives to our best, wasting not one bit of them. This is the grandest memorial possible to our loved ones who have left.

Sincerely,

Donald J. Page
Montclair, California

Dear Darren and Donald,

Thank you for your encouraging words. It is always wonderful to hear that our message of positive affirmation for who we proudly are is getting out there. Wayne, who I've known since back in the day when he took celebrity photos for me when I was editor of Soul Teen and Black Beat magazines, is truly a together brother who is currently pursuing a career as a theologian. I will pass your letters on to him. Take care. Be blessed. Be self-loved.

Stanley Bennett Clay

TOM JOYNER'S COON SHOW

Dear Mr. Bennett Clay:

I enjoyed our brief conversation on Sunday (May 24, 1998) during (D.C.) Black Pride. Every year I am thrilled to see thousands of Black lesbians and gay Black men lovin' and relatin' to each other. It does the soul good!

A day or two after returning to Florida, I was going through my Pride memorabilia and came across your magazine. I immediately thought that you and your readership might be interested in engaging in a dialogue about homophobia in the Black community and the images it produces. As the following letter to Tom Joyner indicates, I was not pleased with the show's character Melvin:

Dear Mr. Joyner:

First, let me congratulate you and your staff on the enormous success The Tom Joyner Morning Show (TJMS) presently enjoys. It is certainly a testimony to the creativity, hard work and dedication of a committed group of like-minded individuals. I am especially please that the Tom Joyner Foundation promotes and supports Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's). I am, however, deeply concerned about and somewhat troubled by your show's portrayal of African American Gay men (and by extension, lesbians). Melvin's Love Line (and character) is highly offensive.

Perhaps you have heard this sentiment voiced by other gay Black men and have already "made your show's position clear."

You know, just for the record. If so, I am sorry I missed it and sympathize with your having to hear this once more. On the other hand, if you have not heard this, I ask that you listen with an open mind and heart. For there are many of us who are proud of what you purport to represent and enjoy the usually informative and entertaining four hours you share

with us weekday mornings.

The character "Melvin", although certainly a reality in many gay circles (Black and White), does not represent the majority of gay African American men. In fact, it is precisely this kind of gay man that Black families fear and malign most, making the coming out process a living hell for thousands of African Americans. And, in many cases, it is this image of gay Black America that keeps an equal number of Black men in unhappy heterosexual marriages, cheating on girlfriends and wives and digging themselves deeper into the psycho-somatic pit of self-denial, self-hate, repressed behavior and depression---psychological environments that have the potential to give birth to harmful habits and actions against oneself and against others. It is ironic that, as a race of people, we fight so virulently against the people and their ways of thinking that would have us remain second-class citizens, yet we seem to be comfortable visiting upon minority groups within our own race those same patterns of thought. Moreover, whenever the comparison is made between discrimination based on race and that which is based on sexual orientation, the Black community is up in arms. Well, a civil right is just that, a civil right! And in legal terms, that means anything which relates to the private rights of an individual---any individual---and it is not based on race. It is based on one's humanity---one's being human.

You must know that I struggled for weeks before deciding to finally put pen to paper, as I am aware of your influence and the possible repercussions writing such a letter could have. However, my sense of self-worth, nurtured so painstakingly by my parents and grandparents, would not allow me to be still---for I feel that you are doing a terrible injustice to African American gays and lesbians, their families and the people who love them.

Just this morning (April 28, 1998) two male members of the Levert family were on the show when Melvin "stopped by". He greeted the guest and began his usual banter---acknowledging the attractiveness of one of the singers (I forget which), making them feel uncomfortable with his sexually suggestive comments, and promoting his traditional-Black-gay-male profession---hairstyling. Everything was, of course, "all in good fun", but unwelcome nonetheless. After Melvin left, the TJMS crew immediately began their usual comments about Melvin, all of which suggested that Melvin was okay but different and that they would, in order to keep the Leverts in line, call Melvin back in. What kind of message does that send to both our heterosexual brothers and our gay brothers? Is this not divide and conquer all over again? When do we stop?

I wonder how Black America would embrace Sambo and a Little Sambo's Corner segment on a predominantly White listener-based radio station? Would we understand the obvious and/or cutting-edge humor in something like that? Or would we call every civil and human rights organization in the land? How many minutes would elapse before Reverend Jesse Jackson was on every news program in the United States? Perhaps we Black gay men and lesbians should equip our cars with hidden homophobia buttons so that you and your staff will know every time one of us is offended. Maybe that might help you better understand the numbers.

In closing, Mr. Joyner, I want you to know that I now find myself in a predicament---one unlike any in which I have ever found myself---for I do enjoy your show. However, I am now faced with having to make a decision: 1) to continue listening to your show---hoping that I will hear from you and that my concern will be addressed in a satisfactory was, or 2) to

never listen to your show again. For al;though this issue might seem petty and insignificant on the surface, the roots of my concern run deep in the soil of Black American culture. And it has to stop.

Mr. Joyner's response to me was:

Anthony,

Got your letter. I hope you can find enough about the show that you like to continue being a listener. We appreciate you.

Tom Joyner

Needless to say, I am no longer a listener. Mr. Joyner's almost complete dismissal of my letter was distressing and patronizing. How unfortunate. Perhaps your publication is not the appropriate forum for such a conversation. I do not know. However, I am interested in exploring how we might put together something that enables us to better address these kinds of occurrences in the Black community.

Sincerely,

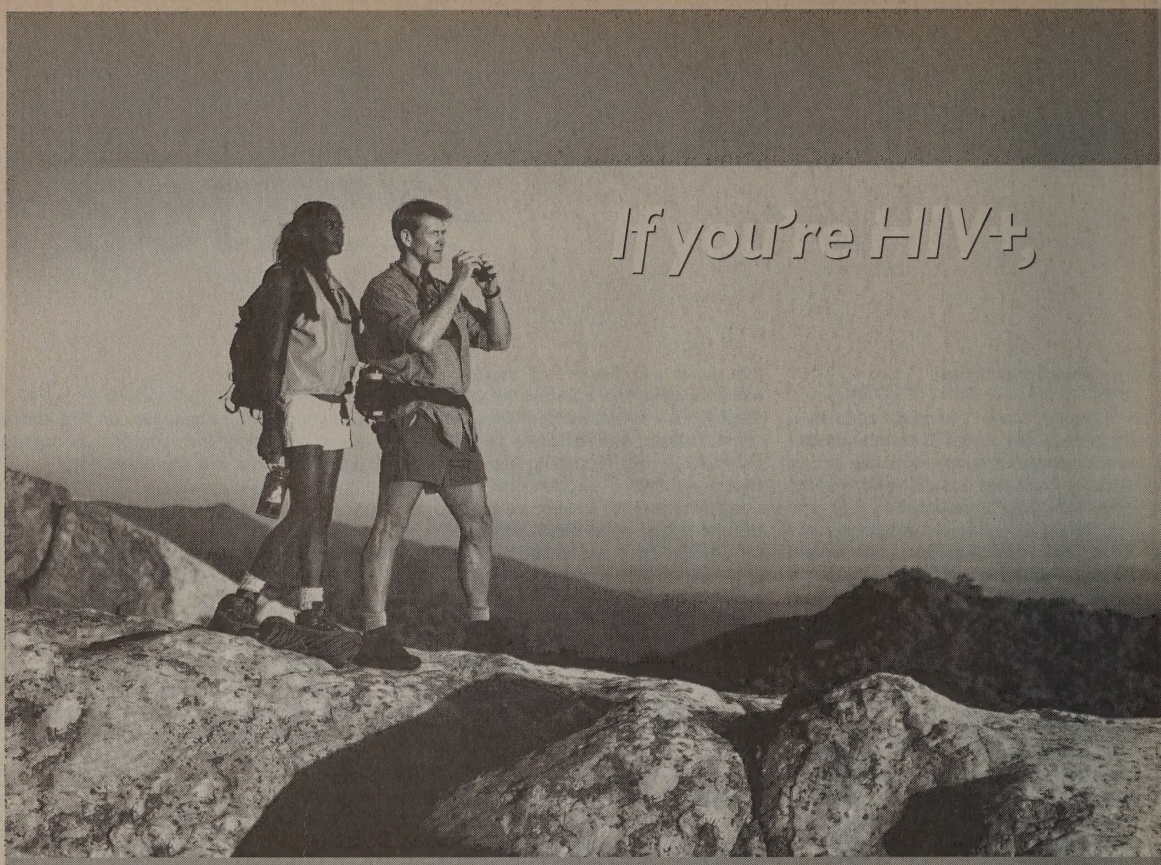
Anthony B. Knight Jr.
Deltona, Florida

Dear Anthony:

Thank you for the alert. It is important that Africentric homosexuals fight with a diligence discrimination and homophobia within our community. The Black community is our home. House cleaning must begin now. I will certainly be writing Mr. Joyner with my concerns and I encourage the more than 2.4 million African American homosexuals, upon viewing the show, to do the same. He can be contacted at: The Tom Joyner Morning Show/ ABC Radio Network/ 13725 Montfort Drive/ Dallas, Texas 75240.

Stanley Bennett Clay

[We gladly welcome your comments and letters. When writing, faxing or e-mailing us please include your telephone number which will not be printed, but is needed for verification only. It is not the policy of SBC to print unverifiable, unsigned, pseudonymous or anonymous letters. Some letters may be edited for the purpose of space and/or clarity. Mail your letters to The Editor/ SBC magazine/ 1155 4th Avenue/ Los Angeles, California 90019. Fax us at 323.733.9200 or e-mail us at sbcmagazine@sprintmail.com]



Being HIV+ isn't easy.

It's a daily challenge that can take all you've got. It helps to have an advantage – to lighten your load and keep you going. Federal healthcare guidelines now call for including a potent protease inhibitor as part of combination treatments to fight HIV. Consider these reasons to make the protease inhibitor CRIXIVAN the foundation of your treatment regimen.

CRIXIVAN is a protease inhibitor that fights HIV. CRIXIVAN can help reduce the chance of illnesses and death associated with HIV. CRIXIVAN can also help lower the amount of HIV in your body (called "viral load") and raise your CD4 -T cell count. Some patients may not experience these effects. CRIXIVAN is not a cure for HIV or AIDS.

New NIH research showed people taking CRIXIVAN in triple therapy lived longer and experienced fewer opportunistic infections.

Recent year-long research conducted by the National Institutes of Health (Protocol ACTG 320) studied over 1,000 patients and confirmed results from another study.

The group of patients receiving CRIXIVAN along with 3TC and AZT achieved a reduction in deaths and AIDS-defining illnesses over those taking 3TC and AZT alone. This reduction was significant enough for the NIH to recommend the study be stopped, so that all participants could benefit from the findings. Because the study was ended early, there was insufficient data to determine the statistical impact of CRIXIVAN on survival.

CRIXIVAN in triple therapy continues to hold serum viral load down below the limit of detection at the one year mark.

In a separate, ongoing landmark study, over 90% of the 31 patients receiving CRIXIVAN, AZT, and 3TC reduced their HIV serum viral load below the limit of detection after 24 weeks (as measured by available tests; the virus may still be present in other organ systems).

Importantly, the limited number of patients who chose to stay with the study for longer periods of time maintained these results through the one year mark.

CRIXIVAN is generally well tolerated.

CRIXIVAN can be taken with a light meal or on an empty stomach. There are side effects associated with protease inhibitors in general and CRIXIVAN in particular. Some patients treated with CRIXIVAN may develop kidney stones. For some, this can lead to more severe kidney problems including kidney failure. Drinking at least 6 glasses of water each day may help reduce the chance of forming a kidney stone. Other side effects reported include rapid breakdown of red blood cells and liver problems. There are some common medications and AIDS-related medications you should not take with CRIXIVAN. Discuss all medications you are taking or plan to take with your doctor.

As with other protease inhibitors, increased bleeding in some patients with hemophilia and increased blood sugar levels or diabetes have been reported. Please read the following page for detailed information on side effects and dosing.

CRIXIVAN may help you live a longer, healthier life.

CRIXIVAN is the number one choice of doctors.*

CRIXIVAN is prescribed for more patients than any other protease inhibitor. With this commitment to CRIXIVAN comes a commitment to product improvements and further research in the battle against HIV. CRIXIVAN is being studied in a broad range of patients and in many different combinations. Ask your doctor for the latest news and developments.

* IMS America; 3/96 - 2/98.

Focus on the rest of your life.

Learn all you can about HIV therapy. Talk with your doctor. Stay informed and stay the course. With viral load below the limit of detection and an increase in CD4 T-cells, it's easier to look forward to the future with confidence.

Please read the following page for more detailed information about CRIXIVAN.

Remember to ask your doctor about CRIXIVAN.

CRIXIVAN®
(indinavir sulfate)
Capsules

Going the distance.

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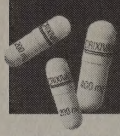


Patient Information about CRIXIVAN® (KRIK-sih-van)

for HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) Infection
Generic name: indinavir (in-DIH-nuh-veer) sulfate

Please read this information before you start taking CRIXIVAN. Also, you should read the information included with CRIXIVAN each time you receive your prescription, just in case anything has changed. Remember, this information does not take the place of careful discussions with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss CRIXIVAN when you start taking your medication and at regular checkups. You should remain under a doctor's care when using CRIXIVAN and should not change or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.

What is CRIXIVAN?

CRIXIVAN is an oral capsule used for the treatment of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). HIV is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). CRIXIVAN is a type of HIV drug called a protease (PRO-tee-ase) inhibitor.

How does CRIXIVAN work?

CRIXIVAN is a protease inhibitor that fights HIV. CRIXIVAN can help reduce your chances of getting illnesses associated with HIV. CRIXIVAN can also help lower the amount of HIV in your body (called "viral load") and raise your CD4 (T) cell count. CRIXIVAN may not have these effects in all patients.

CRIXIVAN is usually prescribed with other anti-HIV drugs such as ZDV (also called AZT), 3TC, ddI, ddC, or d4T. CRIXIVAN works differently from these other anti-HIV drugs. Talk with your doctor about how you should take CRIXIVAN.

CRIXIVAN has been studied in adults. The safety and effectiveness of CRIXIVAN in children and adolescents have not been established.

How should I take CRIXIVAN?

There are six important things you must do to help you benefit from CRIXIVAN:

1. **Take CRIXIVAN capsules every day as prescribed by your doctor.** Continue taking CRIXIVAN unless your doctor tells you to stop. Take the exact amount of CRIXIVAN that your doctor tells you to take, right from the very start. To help make sure you will benefit from CRIXIVAN, you must not skip doses or take "drug holidays." If you don't take CRIXIVAN as prescribed, the activity of CRIXIVAN may be reduced (due to resistance).
2. **Take CRIXIVAN capsules every 8 hours around the clock, *every day.*** It may be easier to remember to take CRIXIVAN if you take it at the same time every day. If you have questions about when to take CRIXIVAN, your doctor or health care provider can help you decide what schedule works for you.
3. **If you miss a dose by more than 2 hours, wait and then take the next dose at the regularly scheduled time.** However, if you miss a dose by less than 2 hours, take your missed dose immediately. Then take your next dose at the regularly scheduled time. Do not take more or less than your prescribed dose of CRIXIVAN at any one time.
4. **Take CRIXIVAN with water.** You can also take CRIXIVAN with other beverages such as skim or non-fat milk, juice, coffee, or tea.
5. **Ideally, take each dose of CRIXIVAN without food but with water at least one hour before or two hours after a meal.** Or you can take CRIXIVAN with a light meal. Examples of light meals include:
   - dry toast with jelly, juice, and coffee (with skim or non-fat milk and sugar if you want)
   - corn flakes with skim or non-fat milk and sugar

   Do not take CRIXIVAN at the same time as any meals that are high in calories, fat, and protein (for example — a bacon and egg breakfast). When taken at the same time as CRIXIVAN, these foods can interfere with CRIXIVAN being absorbed into your bloodstream and may lessen its effect.
6. **It is critical that you drink at least six 8-ounce glasses of liquid (preferably water) throughout the day, every day. CRIXIVAN can cause kidney stones.** Having enough fluids in your body should help reduce the chances of forming a kidney stone. Call your doctor or other health care provider if you develop kidney pains (middle to lower stomach or back pain) or blood in the urine.

Does CRIXIVAN cure HIV or AIDS?

CRIXIVAN is not a cure for HIV or AIDS. People taking CRIXIVAN may still develop infections or other conditions associated with HIV. Because of this, it is very important for you to remain under the care of a doctor. Although CRIXIVAN is not a cure for HIV or AIDS, CRIXIVAN can help reduce your chances of getting illnesses, including death, associated with HIV. CRIXIVAN may not have these effects in all patients.

Does CRIXIVAN reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

CRIXIVAN has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination.

Who should not take CRIXIVAN?

Do not take CRIXIVAN if you have had a serious allergic reaction to CRIXIVAN or any of its components.

What other medical problems or conditions should I discuss with my doctor?

Talk to your doctor if:

- You are pregnant or if you become pregnant while you are taking CRIXIVAN. We do not yet know how CRIXIVAN affects pregnant women or their developing babies.
- You are breast-feeding. You should stop breast-feeding if you are taking CRIXIVAN.

Also talk to your doctor if you have:

- Problems with your liver, especially if you have mild or moderate liver disease caused by cirrhosis.
- Problems with your kidneys.
- Diabetes
- Hemophilia

Tell your doctor about any medicines you are taking or plan to take, including non-prescription medicines.

*Can CRIXIVAN be taken with other medications?***

Drugs you should not take with CRIXIVAN:

SELDANE® (terfenadine)	HISMANAL® (astemizole)
VERSED® (midazolam)	HALCION® (triazolam)
PROPULSID® (cisapride)	Ergot medications (e.g., Wigraine® and Cafergot®)

Taking CRIXIVAN with the above medications could result in serious or life-threatening problems (such as irregular heartbeat or excessive sleepiness).

In addition, you should not take CRIXIVAN with rifampin, known as RIFADIN®, RIFAMATE®, RIFATER®, or RIMACTANE®.

Drugs you can take with CRIXIVAN include:

RETROVIR® (zidovudine, ZDV also called AZT)	BIAXIN® (clarithromycin)
TAGAMET® (cimetidine)	isoniazid (INH)
DIFLUCAN® (fluconazole)	ORTHO-NOVUM 1/35® (oral contraceptive)
EPIVIR™ (lamivudine, 3TC)	ZERIT® (stavudine, d4T)

BACTRIM®/SEPTRA® (trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole)

VIDEX® (didanosine, ddI) — If you take CRIXIVAN with VIDEX®, take them at least one hour apart.

MYCOBUTIN® (rifabutin) — If you take CRIXIVAN with MYCOBUTIN®, your doctor may adjust both
the dose of MYCOBUTIN and the dose of CRIXVAN.

NIZORAL® (ketoconazole) — If you take CRIXIVAN with NIZORAL®, your doctor may adjust the dose of CRIXIVAN.

Talk to your doctor about any medications you are taking.

What are the possible side effects of CRIXIVAN?

Like all prescription drugs, CRIXIVAN can cause side effects. The following is **not** a complete list of side effects reported with CRIXIVAN when taken either alone or with other anti-HIV drugs. Do not rely on this page alone for information about side effects. Your doctor can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects.

Some patients treated with CRIXIVAN developed kidney stones. In some of these patients this led to more severe kidney problems, including kidney failure or inflammation of the kidneys. Drinking at least six 8-ounce glasses of liquid (preferably water) each day should help reduce the chances of forming a kidney stone. Call your doctor or other health care provider if you develop kidney pains (middle to lower stomach or back pain) or blood in the urine.

Some patients treated with CRIXIVAN have had rapid breakdown of red blood cells (hemolytic anemia) which in some cases was severe or resulted in death.

Some patients treated with CRIXIVAN have had liver problems including liver failure and death. Some patients had other illnesses or were taking other drugs. It is uncertain if CRIXIVAN caused these liver problems.

Diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) have occurred in patients taking protease inhibitors. In some of these patients, this led to ketoacidosis, a serious condition caused by poorly controlled blood sugar. Some patients had diabetes before starting protease inhibitors, others did not. Some patients required adjustments to their diabetes medication. Others needed new diabetes medication.

In some patients with hemophilia, increased bleeding has been reported.

Clinical Studies

Increases in bilirubin (one laboratory test of liver function) have been reported in approximately 10% of patients. Usually, this finding has not been associated with liver problems. However, on rare occasions, a person may develop yellowing of the skin and/or eyes.

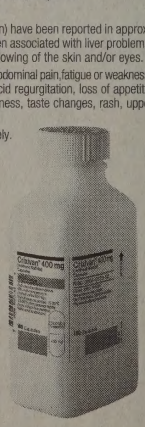
Side effects occurring in 2% or more of patients included: abdominal pain,fatigue or weakness, flank pain, feeling unwell, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, acid regurgitation, loss of appetite, dry mouth, back pain, headache, trouble sleeping, dizziness, taste changes, rash, upper respiratory infection, dry skin, and sore throat.

Swollen kidneys due to blocked urine flow occurred rarely.

Marketing Experience

Other side effects reported since CRIXIVAN has been marketed include: abdominal swelling; inflammation of the kidneys; increased fat appearing in areas such as the neck, abdomen, and back; change in skin color; severe skin reactions; hair loss; crystals in the urine; and allergic reactions.

Tell your doctor promptly about these or any other unusual symptoms. If the condition persists or worsens, seek medical attention.



How should I store CRIXIVAN capsules?

- Keep CRIXIVAN capsules in the bottle they came in and at room temperature (59°F-86°F).
- Keep CRIXIVAN capsules dry by leaving the small desiccant "pillow" in the bottle. Keep the bottle closed.

This medication is prescribed for a particular condition. Do not use it for any other condition or give it to anybody else. Keep CRIXIVAN and all medicines out of the reach of children. If you suspect that more than the prescribed dose of this medicine has been taken, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

This provides a summary of information about CRIXIVAN. If you have any questions or concerns about either CRIXIVAN or HIV, talk to your doctor.

CRIXIVAN®
(indinavir sulfate)
Capsules

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NATIONAL BLACK LESBIAN AND GAY LEADERSHIP FORUM INSTITUTES A NEW MANAGEMENT TEAM

Washington D.C.---The National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum (NBLGLF), announced the development of a new Management Team to oversee the daily operations of the organization. This structure was developed and approved by the organization's Board of Directors at their annual retreat in Denver this past May.

The Management Team is comprised of three board members, a NBLGLF staffer and the former national field director for the organization. Jubi D. Headley, hired by NBLGLF almost five months ago, resigned June 5, 1998 as the organization's second Executive Director. He will join the Board of Directors and serve on the Management Team. The additional members of the team are Willa J. Taylor, Board Chair; Ronald Johnson, Treasurer; Monique Meadows, NBLGLF Office Administrator; and Mandy Carter, Field Program Consultant for NBLGLF.

Facing a serious financial shortfall, due in part to unexpected revenue loss at this year's Annual Conference, the Board of Directors has taken this step to save money and to shift the responsibilities of managing NBLGLF to a "team" and not one individual. The organization will be working over the next 24 months to implement a Strategic Plan which it hopes will put NBLGLF on solid programmatic and financial footing.

"This is the perfect opportunity for us to really visualize what the Forum will be as we enter a new millennium. This restructuring allows us to think administratively and holds all of us accountable for the success of this vital organization," said NBLGLF Board Chair Taylor.

The organization is currently involved in numerous national projects including a collaborative effort with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) to assist in their annual People of Color Institute, working with GLBT African American activists and leaders to form a National Federation of Black Pride Festivals, hosting Town Hall meetings across the country to discuss the status of the gay and lesbian liberation movement, and continuing to provide counseling and preventative services through the AIDS Prevention Team in Los Angeles. The Twelfth Annual NBLGLF Conference is scheduled for February, 1999 in Atlanta, Georgia.

ULOAH'S 8TH ANNUAL SISTAHFEST COMMENCES OCTOBER 2

Los Angeles, California---United Lesbians of African Heritage (ULOAH) will hold it's 8th annual SISTAHfest retreat October 2-4, 1998 at Camp JCA Shalom, located high in the woodsy hills above Malibu, California, overlooking the Pacific ocean.

Since 1991over one thousand women have taken part in this annual event. The 138 acre wooded canyon area will provide a weekend safe haven of interactive workshops, discussion groups, music, comedy, concerts, sports, art, dance, games, relaxation, vendors, refreshment and renewal.

The main lodging accommodations are dormitory style cabins with bunk beds. Full restroom/shower facilities are located near each group of cabins. This year semi-private lodging will be available, which consists of a limited number of double occupancy hotel type suites. These suites are equipped with two twin beds, carpeting, a dresser, closet space, a private restroom and other amenities. And as always, there is plenty of space for sistahs to pitch their own tents and a limited number of spaces for RV's (sorry, no hookups). Seven meals (vegetarian and non-vegetarian) will be served during SISTAHfest, from Friday's lunch through Sunday's lunch, and additional fruit, snacks, and soft drinks are available in the Comfort Zone cafe 24 hours a day.

Most SISTAHfest is accessible, yet certain areas pose difficulty for some women. Women with special needs are advised to inform SISTAHfest in advance so that appropriate accommodations can be attempted and made available. In addition, many of the events will be sign-language interpreted for the hearing impaired.

ULOAH, founded in 1989 by D. Lisa Powell, Saundra Tignor and Yolanda Whitington, was created to promote visibility and unity among lesbians of African heritage, thereby increasing wellness, acceptance and understanding in their lives. It's further purpose is to combat all forms of oppression affecting black lesbians by providing seminars, lectures and workshops, conduct conferences, and publish literature and materials which educates lesbians of African heritage regarding their rich cultural heritage and traditions. And to provide an organization sensitive and responsive to the spiritual needs of black lesbians while increasing the economic security of black lesbians by providing educational services relating to business and career development, financial planning and resource management. ULOAH is also dedicated to supporting and encouraging all expressions of creativity in the arts.

This year's SISTAHfest is a weekend exclusively for lesbians of African heritage. The per person cost, which 7 meals, lodging and all activities, is $135 if postmarked before September 25, 1998. On site cost, cash only, is $150.

For a registration form and/or for further information, contact ULOAH's hotline at 213.960.5051 or visit their website at http://members.aol.com/uloah.

'PICNIC' IS NO PICNIC FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

Boston, Massachusetts---Although not taught in America learning institutions and literature, it is noted in most black history professional circles and literature that the origin of the term 'picnic' derives from the acts of lynching African-Americans, according to research received by SBC Boston correspondent, Gregory Victorianne.

The word "picnic" is derived from the phrase 'Pick a Nigger'. This is where white individuals would 'pic' a black person to lynch and make this into a family gathering. There would be food and music and a 'picnic'...('nic' being the white acronym for 'nigger').

"We should choose to use the word 'barbecue' or 'outing' instead of the word 'picnic'," stated Victorianne, "As for me, I will never say 'picnic' again!!!"

SAFE SEX PROGRAMS REDUCE HIV RISK

Washington D.C.---Safe sex education programs are effective in reducing the risk of HIV transmission, even in high-risk populations, according to a federal report released in June.

Officials at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) reported the findings of the

411

Multisite HIV Prevention Trail, the largest randomized, controlled HIV intervention study performed in the US to date, at a Washington DC press conference. The report is also published in the June 19th issue of the journal Science.

The trial consisted of 3,706 African American and Hispanic men and women attending 37 inner-city clinics. All of the participants were at high risk for HIV infection and most were single, unemployed and had been previously treated for a sexually transmitted disease. Approximately half of the subjects were assigned to attend seven HIV prevention sessions. These sessions, held twice weekly, were conducted in small groups (5 to 15 people), and emphasized ways to reduce or avoid high-risk sexual behaviors. The control subjects participated in a single-session AIDS education program.

After one year, the NIMH researchers noted significant reductions in high-risk sexual behavior in the people who had attended the program, compared with the controls. None of the participants used condoms before the study, but at one year after the intervention, consistent condom use rates were 43% in the intervention group and 34.4% in the control group. Also, men in the intervention group had one half the rate of gonorrhea, compared with the control group.

"NIMH has identified an effective strategy that could be adopted by public health and community organizations all across America," Dr. Steven E. Hyman, NIMH director, commented. "If these behavioral changes were maintained for even one year, there would be a profound, cost-effective public health impact in the communities that adopted this program."

At the press conference, Hyman stressed the cost-effectiveness of this intervention. He explained "...the cost of the (behavioral intervention) is about the cost of 1 week of protease inhibitors"---antiviral agents used to treat HIV infection.

CONDOMS BEAT ABSTINENCE: NEW YOUTH STUDY REVEALS

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania---Safe sex lessons for children are more effective if condom use instead of abstinence is emphasized, researchers found in a study of Philadelphia African American adolescents.

A separate finding underscored the compelling need for the grown-up subject matter: Although the youngsters' average age was just 11, 25 percent of them said they were no longer virgins.

"We have to begin earlier to give children the kind of information they need to protect themselves," said Princeton University psychologist John B. Jemmott III, the lead author.

The study of 659 sixth- and seventh-graders at three inner-city Philadelphia schools sought ways to stem the high rate of sexually transmitted diseases among black adolescents. Among 13-to-19 year olds with AIDS, blacks represent 57 percent and whites just 23 percent in 1996, federal statistics show, while the gonorrhea rate among 15-to-19 year olds was about 24 times higher among blacks than whites.

The researchers in the Philadelphia study divided the youngsters into three groups, each receiving eight hours of health education. One focused on abstinence, one concentrated on condom use and a control group addressed avoiding nonsexual diseases.

Three months later, 12.5 percent of the abstinence-group students reported having recent sex, compared with 16.6 percent among the condom group and 21.5 percent in the control group.

At six months, slightly more of the abstinence-group students were having sex than the condom-group students. By 12 months, 20 percent of the abstinence group had recent sex, compared with 16.5 percent of the condom group and 23.1 percent of the control group.

The abstinence group also reported having engaged in more unprotected sex than the condom group.

"If the goal is reduction of unprotected sexual intercourse, the safer-sex strategy may hold the most promise, particularly with those adolescents who are already sexually experienced," the researchers wrote in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Conservative groups such as the Family Research Council have pushed the abstinence approach, and the federal government has mandated that states use $50 million in sex-education money for abstinence-only programs.

But Emory University psychologist Ralph DiClemnte said the findings "indicated a need to reconsider the role of abstinence programs" in safe-sex education.

BLACKS SMOKERS ABSORB MORE NICOTINE, HAVE HIGHER CANCER RISK

Atlanta,Georgia---African American smokers have higher levels of the metabolized form of nicotine in their bodies than do white smokers, providing potential clues about why blacks are less likely to quit smoking and more likely to develop lung cancer than whites, according to a study of more than 2,000 people by federal researchers published July 8th in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

The findings may indicate behavioral differences in the way African Americans smoke, or biological differences in the way they metabolize the nicotine metabolite, called cotinine, said lead investigator Ralph Caraballo, an epidemiologist at the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Office on Smoking and Health.

After controlling for variables such as body weight, age and exposure to secondhand smoke, researches at the CDC found that African American smokers had 12% to 50% higher levels of cotinine than white smokers.

A separate UC San Francisco study of black and white smokers in the same journal also found that black smokers absorb more nicotine per cigarette and retain cotinine in their bodies than white smokers.

The studies suggest that prevention and treatment strategies may need to be adapted to suit variances in ethnic and racial groups.

"To me these studies emphasize the importance that future research does a better job in including the divers nature of the population in the U.S.," said Jack Henningfield, associate professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University Medical School and editor of the 1988 surgeon general report on nicotine addiction.

In the CDC study, researchers analyzed blood samples from 2,136 subjects age 17 or

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AIDS WALK LOS ANGELES

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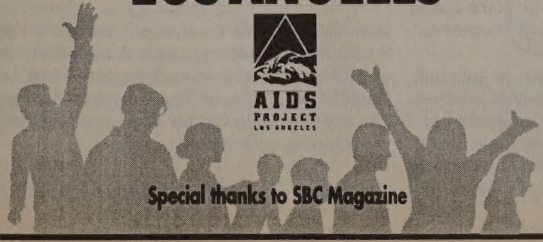
AIDS PROJECT LOS ANGELES



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older who had participated in the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey between 1988 and 1991. All subjects had reported smoking at least one cigarette in the five days prior to the time blood samples were taken.

Previous studies had also shown ethno-racial differences in levels of cotinine between African Americans and whites, but the study by CDC researchers puts the weight of a large, population-based survey behind those earlier findings, in addition to including Mexican Americans in the analysis.

The study at UC San Francisco suggests a combination of behavioral and biological factors may be at work. In the study, 40 black and 39 white smokers were given pure nicotine and cotinine intravenously. Researchers found that black subjects cleared 25% less of the cotinine from their bodies, compared to white subjects. In addition, the subjects were later allowed to smoke, and it was found that blacks took in 30% more nicotine per cigarette.

"This means black people who are smoking cigarettes are taking more puffs, more deeply," said Dr. Neal Benowitz, chief of the Division of Clinical Pharmacology at the UC San Francisco Department of Medicine and co-author of the study. "Higher intake of nicotine may also mean greater absorption of the cancer-causing substance found in the tar and smoke of tobacco. This is what we think explains why black men have a higher risk of lung cancer," Benowitz said.

In addition to having a higher lung cancer risk, African Americans who had tried to quit for at least one day were slightly more likely than whites to have relapsed to daily smoking, according to data from the National Cancer Institute.

"What these studies show is that there may be genetic variations in why people smoke and in the consequences of smoking," said Dr. Edward Sellers, professor of pharmacology and medicine at the University of Toronto. Seller co-authored a recent study indicating that a defect in a gene, labeled CYP2A6, may cause nicotine to be broken down more quickly, leading more readily to nicotine addiction.

Cotinine has been used as a marker for tobacco use and exposure because it remains in the body up to 10 times longer than nicotine, making it easier to detect.

Sellers said that a group of enzymes, known as UGT's, responsible for detoxifying drugs in the body, may also be important in the breakdown of cotinine.

"In smoking prevention research, we usually call someone an addicted smoker after they've smoked 100 cigarettes," said Jennifer Unger, assistant professor of research in prevention medicine at USC, "For blacks, they may become addicted even earlier because they get more nicotine per cigarette. This might also explain why black smokers show higher rates of tobacco-related diseases even if they smoke fewer cigarettes than white smokers."

To the extent that the problem is behavioral, an obvious solution would be to target more smoking cessation programs to African American communities, experts say. As the surgeon general's report on minority tobacco use points out, many black smokers are not getting information on cessation techniques through such programs.

Johns Hopkins Henningfield said: "Most tobacco research in the past have been conducted in the Caucasian population. The important issues that these studies raise is in developing preventative and treatment strategies. We can't assume that one size fits all."

THE CHICAGO THEATRE COMPANY REMOUNTS STANLEY BENNETT CLAY'S 'RITUAL' SEPTEMBER 18-OCTOBER 26

Chicago, Illinois---The Chicago Theatre Company, the windy city's critically acclaimed black theatre company, will kick off it's 15th anniversary season with a revival of Stanley Bennett Clay's controversial drama Ritual. Recipient of 4 NAACP Theatre Awards, 3 Drama-logue Awards and an L.A. Weekly Award. Ritual is the story of a wealthy Johnny Cochran-like lawyer whose pursuit of the American dream is shadowed by a family he hardly knows---an alcoholic wife intimidated by a beautiful daughter who has taken over the household with eyes on dad, and a brilliant homosexual son who has dropped out of an Ivy league university to come home and save his mother and his family at all cost.
Ritual is one of three revivals chosen as outstanding productions of the CTCs past to fill it's 15th season. Mckinley Johnson's Train Is Comin' will run February 19 thru April 18, followed by Samuel L. Kelly's Pill Hill will be performed from May 21 to June 27.

The Chicago Theatre Company is located at 500 East 67th Street/ Chicago, Illinois 60637. For further information, including ticket information, call The Chicago Theatre Company at 773.493.5360.

Stanley Bennett Clay's newest play, In Search of Pretty Young Black Men, will world premiere March, 1999, in Los Angeles.

'B-BOY BLUES' AUTHOR JAMES EARL HARDY SEEKS SUBMISSIONS FOR NEW ANTHOLOGY

New York, New York---Alyson Publications has commissioned best-selling author James Earl Hardy to edit a new collection of work by, about and for Black Gay/Bi/SGL writers, similar to the best-selling In The Life and Brother to Brother titles. Hardy seeks any of the following submission:

A maximum of six poems in any style or form. A max-

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imum of three short stories. An excerpt from a novel that is/stands as a chapter or short fiction piece (DO NOT send a manuscript). Personal essays, scholarly papers, cultural criticism, historical/political analysis, interviews/profiles and/or non-fiction feature articles.

All submissions must be typed and double-spaced (poetry may be single-spaced); no handwritten submissions will be considered.

Include a bio of yourself (no more than 300 words) and a self-addressed stamped envelope for the return of your materials.

The deadline for submissions is December 15, 1998. All possible contributors will be notified by or before March 1, 1999. The collection will be published in the fall of 1999.

If you have any questions, comments, or queries, contact James Earl Hardy at NewMoonSon@aol.com.

All submissions should be sent to: James Earl Hardy/ P.O. Box 4371/ Los Angeles CA 90078.

'NO GUEST LIST', A BLACK GAY CLUB DANCING VOLUME, SEEKS SUBMISSIONS

Los Angeles, California---grapevinepress, publishers of G.B. Mann's critically acclaimed fiction debut 'Low-Hanging Fruit', seeks submissions on all aspects of "club-dancing" for a photographic, artistic and literary work celebrating the dance as experienced in African American gay dance clubs. "No Guest List", the final volume, will explore the spiritual, creative, recreational, social, and artistic impressions and experiences of The Dance. Target release date is March 1999. Quevin Oji, grapevinepress publisher, edits.

Works most likely to be selected for publication will "celebrate" club-dancing, explore its spirituality, social role, fun and art.

Examples of submissions sought are: descriptions and addresses of dance clubs; the well-known and fabulous, as well as the obscure, notorious dive; those going strong and those only a memory now. Portraits of dancers and descriptions of fantasies engendered by the dance club experience, as well as personal memories of dancing in clubs; what one "gets" from it.

Names of dances, short to medium length poems that sing of the joys and pathos of the dance floor. Short fiction that takes place on or near the dance floor, and short essays documenting the history and evolution of the black gay dance club and its place in the African dance continuum.

Cities, locations, quotes, quips, anecdotes and advice, as well as info on the talk and definitions of black gay clubspeak. Also information regarding the artists and music who epitomize the spirit of club dancing.

Photos of folks dressed to go out (photo releases must be made available) and photos of club facades are also sought as well as dance club line art, artistic flyers, and promo pieces.

Submission deadline is November 15, 1998.

For further information call 323.296.8911;
Qevin Oji, Editor; email: grapepress@aol.com; or send completed works for consideration to grapevinepress/ P.O. Box 56057/ Los Angeles CA 90056-0057.

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Being openly gay is not an issue in my campaign. It s a normal part of who I am. It s really old news and it s not my problem if somebody doesn t know. What is an issue is granting D.C. s 550,000 residents full legislative and economic autonomy from the federal government. We do not have the same Democratic rights as other U.S. citizens. We have no representation in the Senate.

I remember back in the mid 80's when AIDS first began devastating the homosexual male community and religious zealots would fold their arms across their chest and smirk that AIDS was God's punishment for gay men. The defensive retort from our community was always, 'Well if AIDS is God's punishment for gay men, then lesbians must be God's chosen people.' Because back in the mid 80's lesbians were virtually untouched physically by AIDS, yet, women, both homosexual and heterosexual, were touched humanistically, for it was women who stood at the forefront of the then unpopular nurturing and caring and fighting for and doing for men living with and dying from pandemic and the attended hostility.

In spite of this, male chauvinism in the same gender loving community has kept women at second class citizen status. This, in turn, has created a new defense on the part of same gender loving women who are declaring that enough is enough. Battle lines, those eased, are still clearly visible.

"I think that there is a lot of hurt and suspicion in both camps and I think that one of the things we need to do is own that, even among those of us who say 'oh, that can't possibly be true'. In fact those are the first ones that should own up to the fact that there's been some hurt and that their is mistrust in the community." stated noted activist Sabrina Sojourner, "By putting that on the table, we can find out what those things are and address them. I believe that there are, for instance, women who believe that the men's community is biased and sexist and does not listen to women and, in fact, often dismisses the leadership of women, and that there are men who believe that the women's community is hateful towards men, and that they could care less about what the men's issues are.

"When we start looking at who gets the notice and awards for their work in HIV/AIDS it's primarily men. There have been very few

SABRINA SOJOURNER
A CANDIDATE WITH ROOTS IN MANY GARDENS

by Stanley Bennett Clay

women who have received recognition for the support, hard work, and advocacy that they have provided."

Sojourner, who in 1996 became the first open lesbian to represent the District of Columbia in the U.S. House of Representatives, knows first hand of our community's internal challenges. The distinguished Representative currently serves D.C. as the Chair of the Metropolitan Washington Regional HIV Health Services Planning Council and, as Chairperson, guides a 60 member board through the processes necessary to meet its goals of serving Ryan White Title 1 recipients. "The District of Columbia is number one in the country in terms of HIV infection and AIDS. Our health system is basically as bad as any Third World country. We make sure that Title 1 dollars---and essentially our ability to deliver [AIDS] services---don't fall through the cracks."

On September 15th, D.C. citizens have the opportunity to elect Representative Sojourner to an at-large seat on the city council where she plans to represent all the District's residents in an age old fight.

"Being openly gay is not an issue in my campaign. It's a normal part of who I am. It's really old news and it's not my problem if somebody doesn't know. What is an issue is granting D.C.'s 550,000 residents full legislative and economic autonomy from the federal government. We do not have the same Democratic rights as other U.S. citizens. We have no representation in the Senate. We have no voting representation within the House of Representatives. However we fight in wars, pay taxes, vote in local elections. But at their whim 535 people [Congress] can over-turn laws made by our elected officials, micro-manage our budget in ways that are inappropriate, and shove experimental social policy down our throats whether we like it or not. They do things to us they wouldn't think of doing in their own jurisdiction. We want voting representation and budgetary and legislative autonomy. Puerto Rico and Guam have more autonomy than we do."

Since taking office, Representative Sojourner has lobbied and submitted testimony before Congress on behalf of D.C. residents, organized citizen lobby days, and traveled to over 30 communities to educate other American citizens about the inequities faced by D.C. residents. She connects D.C.'s struggle for full Constitutional representation and autonomy with other human and civil rights issues being fought for.

An activist with her roots in many gardens, Sojourner sees many other challenges that need to be met in D.C. "The economic development of District is vital, both in terms of providing support for the businesses that already have a commitment to the District as well as bringing in new businesses, and of course, part of that is streamlining different processes for licensing and taxes. Establishing higher standards for principals, teachers, students and performance in public schools and helping the environment are the primary issues that we're dealing with."

With a history of social and political activism spanning over 25 years, including service as a legislative aide to powerful Congresswoman Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), the nationally noted feminist writer, speaker, trainer and council candidate is considered the front runner in a field of seven. If elected, Sojourner, who has been with her life partner (Letitia Gomez of the National Latino/a Lesbian and Gay Organization) for seven years, would also become the nation's most visible elected lesbian of color.

"I think very specifically to the black lesbian and gay/bisexual/transgender community that my candidacy offers us a different opportunity," she states. "We have lots of different officials, both elected, appointed and identified leaders who are black who are very conciliatory and proper when it comes to the issue of lesbian and gay people, however, who they go to and who they deal with is primarily white. And even though there are lots of us who are out and who are visible, my candidacy offers a very good opportunity to say 'you can't just deal with the whitefolk anymore.' And this is not saying anything about the nature of those white folks. This is really saying something about us and our community."

So what kind of help does she need from our community?

"Locally I need volunteers and financial support. Nationally I need financial support!' You do not need to live in the District of Columbia to make a financial contribution."

The struggle of D.C. residents to be on par with their fellow Americans is not much different than the struggle of women in the same gender loving community to be on par with the men of the community. The Honorable Sabrina Sojourner knows that well. And now is the time for us to know, and to learn, and to do our part. Shutting out our mothers, our sisters, our teacher, our friends, is shutting out a large part of us. From club owner Jewel Thias-Williams, whose business acumen is legendary, to Representative Sojourner, whose election would be ground breaking, same gender loving women have always been there for the men. It's time to now be there for them.
All you D.C. residents, get out and vote. All the rest of you, send money!

Contributions can be made to
Sabrina Sojourner for Council
1216 Michigan Avenue NE
Washington D.C. 20017
ph: 202.526.4442 fax: 202.526.0554
email: sojourner@crystalbuddha.com

Positive Colours:
Gay Men of Color Hold Treatment Conference

by

Terrance Evans

It was a picture perfect day in Los Angeles, and while many were deciding how to wake up that gorgeous "piece" from his snoring, or packing up to head to the beach and bask in the sun, approximately 200 gay men of several races came together to discuss topics including: access to treatment; collaboration among gay men of color service providers; and new advances in traditional and complimentary or alternative treatments. Even those who attended for the free food or prize give-a-ways surely left the event with a feeling of hope, well being, and empowerment.

The inspirational day started with a continental breakfast, creating a sense of family, followed by Introductions and Cultural Affirmations, the "wake up" panel, introduced by Christopher Smith, Senior Health Educator for the AIDS Prevention Team and member of the planning committee for the event. Among the initial speakers was South Bay AIDS activist and "guardian of healing medicine", Michael White Bear Claws, a full blooded Cheyenne River Sioux Native American and actor, who led us all in a life-affirming prayer of racial harmony and spiritual strength.

Then the attendees were jolted out of Saturday morning listlessness by keynote speaker Dr. Wilbert Jordan, known leader in the field of HIV treatment, who started the Oasis Clinic at King Drew Medical Center. In his witty and informative presentation, "Why You Should Be In Treatment", Dr. Jordan used the humorous term "Closetomia" to describe the tendency in communities of color, specifically the African American community, to deny the existence of AIDS and our reluctance to seek treatment. The Religious Right and the current conservative trend in politics also thwart our efforts to provide adequate education and treatment options in our communities. "I don't care how many preachers lay there hands on you, it will not cure you of AIDS," Jordan said, provoking laughter and some uneasiness from a slowly stirring audience.

Dr. Jordan went on to describe the four "zones" he considers when deciding on a treatment plan for his patients. Representing the least aggressive treatment plan, Zone 1 patients have low viral loads and high CD4 cell counts. Viral load is the measure of HIV infected cells produced by the virus. CD4 cells (also known as T helper cells or T-Cells), which are produced within the tissues of the immune system, assist the body in overcoming infections. These are the target cells for HIV invasion. Zone 4 patients, with high viral loads and low CD4 cell counts, are treated with what is known as Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy (HAART), which is aggressive anti-HIV treatment including a combination of protease and reverse transcriptase inhibitors, whose purpose is to reduce viral load to undetectable levels. Monitoring the level of the virus in the system is very important, but current testing methods, which detect and measure HIV in the blood system, DO NOT measure the amount of the virus in the immune system's lymph tissue.

It was impossible to attend all of the highly informative workshops, all facilitated by warm and open activist's within the community. "The Inside Story: Pathogenesis of HIV", was led by Stephan Oxendine, Prevention Director at AIDS Project of the East Bay in Oakland, California, and co-facilitated by Christopher Smith and Bartholomew Casimir, who along with Oxendine are the three founding directors of the African American Men's Health Institute (AAMHI or "AIM HI") in San Francisco. This workshop revealed how quickly the virus goes to work or "hits the ground running" and emphasized the advantages of early testing. Just because you are asymptomatic or "feel-

"I don't care how many preachers lay there hands on you, it will not cure you of AIDS,"

---Doctor Wilbert Jordan

One of my Mama's favorite sayings is, "All that don't kill you, will make you stronger." This sentiment echoed throughout the day at the "Positive Colours, Gay Men of Color Treatment Conference held Saturday, May 30th at USC's Davidson Conference Center. It wasn't easy to get up so early on Saturday morning and anticipate spending the entire day going from one HIV workshop to another. But as Phill Wilson, Director of Public Policy for AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA), said during the introductory panel address for the conference, "Your life is certainly worth one day of your time."

ing well" does not mean you ARE well.

Oxendine described the "pathogenesis" or development of the disease. The virus locates and attacks CD4 cells, first stripping them of their protective coating, then entering the cell. Once inside, the virus duplicates itself many times over, using genetic information and material stored in the cell. Eventually the cell dies, but the multiple copies of HIV go on to seek out more CD4 cells and repeat the process of duplication. The body is able to replace the dead cells, but not at the same rate as the aggressive viral reproduction.

Double Combination Therapy (aka HAART) utilizes at least two drugs simultaneously to more effectively combat the disease. One class of medications called Non-Nucleoside Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitors, stop HIV from copying itself by directly blocking the Reverse Transcriptase Enzyme, a substance in the cell which is needed for the virus to duplicate itself. The next class of mediations is Nucleoside Analogs, which get into the HIV's genetic material (DNA) and help to produce an incomplete, nonfunctional HIV cell. The final class of medications is Protease Inhibitors, which work on the cell during the final stages of its duplication, when newly reproduced virus particles are budding from the infected cell. These drugs cause the new HIV particles to be non-infectious or unable to contaminate more CD4 cells.

Certain CD4 cells are able to remember viruses, of any type, where they are and how to fight them. As CD4 cells decrease, the immune system's memory decreases, creating a need for Immune Restoration or Immune Reconstitution, which is the natural or therapy-induced revival of immunity in a body damaged by HIV infection. Research in this area is still in the early stages of development.

Finally, the discussion turned to presenting information to the public in terms that are easier to understand. According to Oxendine, there are only 40 African-American AIDS Treatment Advocates in the Unites States. These advocates are essential in providing HIV Information in simple language, often capable of using examples from the patient's environment to explain treatment options and other issues. In other words, speaking the client/patient's language. There are many books on the subject, but most of them use very clinical language that only health care professionals can understand. AIDS Update 1998, An Overview of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, an annual publication by Gerald Stein Ph.D., is a source of clearer information. For those with access to the World Wide Web, information is available at the following website: www.thebody.com.

"Adherence, Compliance & Your Busy Life" was a discussion about tailoring your treatment to your lifestyle. Ruben Acosta, Treatment Advocate at the AIDS Service Center in Pasadena, California, examined issues that arise when traditionally "non-adherent" patient's are forced into a strict medication plan or regimen. It's important to make sure that you are a part of the planning for your treatment. Be sure to ask your doctors any questions you have about the medications they prescribe for you and their side effects. Acosta used the example of being in a bar and asking a friend for information on a sexy man. "You'd probably ask, 'How was it?' or 'Is he top or bottom?' But a lot of patients are scared to ask their doctor's about the medications that will be going into their bodies." One good reason to be sure to stay on your prescribed medication plan is the possibility of opening "windows of resistance" to the HIV drugs. When you don't take your medication, you allow a period of time for the virus to recover and possibly mutate and develop a resistance to the medication's affects.

Other workshops included Treatment Update, Managing Side Effects, Nutrition & HIV, Clinical Trials, and Clinical Models of Getting Gay Men of Color into Treatment Programs.

The event, hopefully the first of many more, was arranged through the efforts of the Gay Men of Color Consortium (GMOCC), which includes: the National Black Lesbian & Gay Leadership Forum's AIDS Prevention Team, Minority AIDS Project, BIENESTAR Latino AIDS Project, and the Asian Pacific AIDS Intervention Team.

The lunch hour presentation, "Brother Speaking Out, What is it like being an HIV Infected Gay Man of Color" was the most moving of the day. After being served a lavish lunch, participants heard inspirational stories of struggle and triumph from a multi-racial panel, with a wide range of backgrounds from actor and former drag queen to medical professional. The speakers had dealt with and overcome issues of abandonment from friends, family and significant others; denial of having the disease and of their own sexuality; denial of treatment from government agencies; drug addiction and other destructive behavior. They had all reached a turning point in their lives, when there was no way to go but up. Even when they felt all alone in their fight, they managed to prevail over what one speaker called "the beautiful challenge of HIV".

"Participants heard inspirational stories of struggle and triumph from a multi-racial panel. The speakers had dealt with and overcome issues of abandonment from friends, family and significant others; denial of having the disease and of their own sexuality; denial of treatment from government agencies; drug addiction and other destructive behavior."

I TRIED TO BE SAFE...

by Cedric Whitfield

"I just wanted to get fucked real bad.

No condoms, no nothing, just fucked. I'd been 'good' for so long. I happened to meet a guy who was willing. He happened to have HIV"

Each year in LA County 1,400 to 2,000 people get infected with HIV. Every story is different---shared needles, unprotected sex between men, women, every race, young, old, gay, straight, somewhere in-between. It can happen to anyone. Most people don't find out they are HIV positive until many years after being infected.

ACUTE RETROVIRAL SYNDROME

"I'd been shooting heroin for years. Usually I got needles at the exchange. One night I was needing it pretty bad, and I shared a rig with this guy I used to date. I didn't think about bleaching it. About a week and a half later I got really sick. I could hardly get out of bed, I had a fever, swollen glands, night sweats (and day sweats for that matter) and this weird rash. When I went to the free clinic they said it might be HIV. I took the AIDS test and it came back negative. They did another special test. I tested positive."

When people first get infected with HIV about 50 to 80% percent experience symptoms similar to the flu or mono. People with these symptoms---which could include fever, swollen glands, soar throat, fatigue, weight loss, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea have what is called Acute Retroviral Syndrome (ARS). Some less common symptoms include muscle and joint pain, pain in feet or fingers, and severe headaches or stiff neck.

About 70% of people with ARS will get one or more of the following: Oral, genital or rectal sores red or dark spotty, "Measle-like" rash yeast infection in the mouth or throat

REMEMBER: Not everyone with these symptoms has HIV and not everyone with a new HIV infection gets symptoms.

If you've been at risk of exposure to HIV (yes, this includes oral sex and being a top without a condom) in the previous six weeks or so and have these symptoms you should consider getting tested. Even if it is the flu and you're at a clinic anyway it might be a good time to get an HIV check.

NEW TREATMENTS

"I've been with my boyfriend for about three years. He's been HIV positive for about eight years and he's real healthy.
Over the years we've gotten sorta sloppy about the safe sex thing. About three months ago I got infected. I think he feels worse about it than I do.
I started taking 'protease' and some other medication right after I found out I was positive. My tests for the virus are undetectable.*
Taking all those pills is a pain in the ass, but I'm doing really good. My life could depend on it."

You've probably heard about the new anti-retroviral medicines -- protease inhibitors -- that are helping a lot of people. It's true. Many people who were really sick with AIDS are doing a lot better. It's also helping people with new HIV infection. A study by doctors in New York and L.A. is showing that the medication (mostly a "cocktail" of AZT, 3TC and one or two protease inhibitors) can keep the virus at undetectable levels for over a year and a half (the study is still going). Some of the researchers think that if you identify the infection within the first few months of getting it, stay on the cocktail medication long enough and take it exactly as prescribed, HIV could be eliminated from the body. This hasn't been proven, but they may be taking the first steps toward a cure.

PROJECT OPEN WINDOW DOESN'T WANT YOU

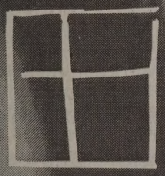
Project Open Window is a research project and referral source for people with new HIV infection. The project studies infected people in L.A. county, how they might have gotten HIV, are they getting treatment or not and how they are coping with being infected. We can provide some lab tests and assist people in finding medical care and emotional support. We want you to stay safe and free of HIV, but we'd like to talk to you if you: are having symptoms of a new HIV infection, have become infected in the past 12 months (with or without symptoms), have tests that show you have a new infection (P-24 positive, HIV antibody negative) or if you just want to find out more
call and ask about Project Open Window at 1-888-700-2900.

Or stop by the S.T.O.R.E.- 745 N. San Vicente Blvd. (at Santa Monica Blvd.) 11AM to 7PM Tuesday thru Saturday. They can give you information and provide counseling and testing (including the oral test - no needles) at no charge. Bring a friend.

Play hard, have fun, stay safe, live long. Later.

[Undetectable - This means that the tests can only go down to a certain level (usually about 200 virus particles per milliliter of blood). It doesn't mean that HIV isn't there. HIV can also be in other parts of the body besides the blood, particularly in the lymph nodes.]*

Project Open Window is a confidential interview study designed to learn more about people who have been infected with HIV for less than one year.



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Fever some symptoms of HIV infection:

- swollen glands, dark spotty rash, sore throat, fatigue, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, muscle & joint pain, weight loss, oral, genital, or rectal sores, oral thrush, foot or finger numbness

HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Debate. Discourse, Demystification at the Vision Theater

by Aubrey McCoy

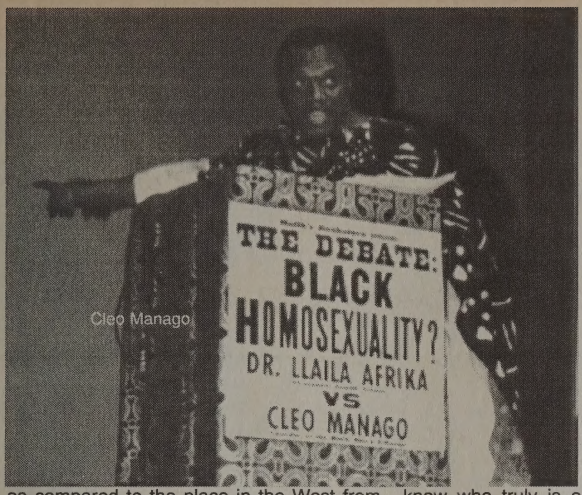
photos by Ron Singleton

In early June, I received a telephone call from Kevin Spears of the AMASSI Center informing me of an upcoming debate on the subject of the origin of homosexuality among Black people. I thought I saw a perfect subject to report on for a friend's journal on human sexuality because it would blend all of the issues of microbes and morals that really are at the core of how all aspects of sexuality are presently regarded. At the same time I felt a definite uneasiness about covering and commenting on an event that I knew beforehand would not only be intense, but also one that might be unnecessarily acrimonious. I also anticipated hysteria and histrionics because most subjects dealing with any aspect of sexuality are "over the top." No subject blends such contentious elements and issues of debate as that of homosexuality in the Black community. It is a mercurial debate. When one is sure the issue is being discussed along clinical, scientific lines, suddenly the debate is changed and it is being discussed on moral lines; and then, when the morality issue has been flayed, it is discussed in terms of politics, or more specifically, the politics of procreation. Without recourse to cheap symbolism, I thought that any person afraid of gun battle would stay away from a debate on the origin of Black homosexuality.

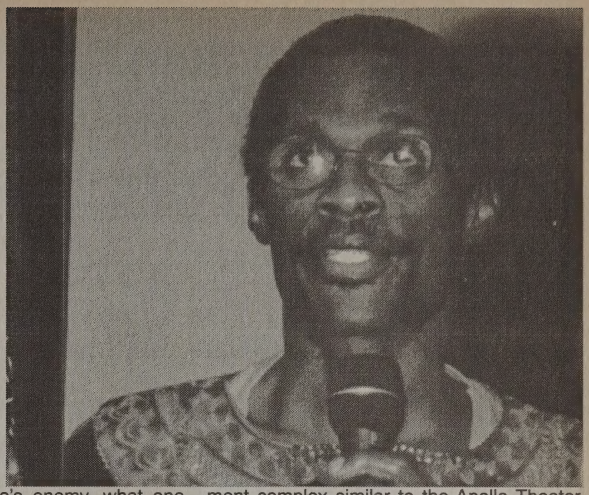
The precise title of the debate that took place on June 28 was "Black Homosexuality?" There are many ways of looking at most titles that end with a question mark. The placards announcing the debate that went up around the community did not have a subtitle, and I am sure that most people who saw the placards must have wondered if those placards did not mean is there such a phenomenon as black homosexuality. I thought, off the bat, that if I had been a principal in the debate making a case under whichever argument for or against such a phenomenon as Black homosexuality, I would have objected to the title of the debate. It made for too wide an area of debate as well as immediate assumptions and slants.

I am hypersensitive about questions that deal with the origin of any social or cultural phenomenon among Black people, whether on the continent or in the Diaspora. I studied African history for several years under the tutelage of Kenneth Onwuka Dike. Up until the publication of Dike's *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta* in 1956, African scholarship emphasized the role of outsiders, particularly Europeans, in the development of African history. Nothing of genius was indigenous to Africa, according to those scholars, particularly of the colonial era, who put forward one of the most pernicious myths of all time. The Hamitic Hypothesis ranks high with the greatest lies of all time, and it has done much damage. When you study Africa before Dike, wherever anything inventive occurs, we see the presence of mysterious little men "form the North," Hamites. Before people like Jan Vansina (who helped Alex Haley with his research for *Roots*) began to make sense out of oral tradition, the easiest explanation for things we didn't know about Africa was to rely on Hamitic Hypothesis. Everything that Africans did that showed "advanced" social skills was attributed to contributions brought to Africa from across the desert by people whose presence scholars could never substantiate but could only imagine. True scholars of Africa know the perniciousness of both isolating Africa and Africans from the great currents of human cultural and social development, but also of denying that Africans bore witness to indigenous cultural and social phenomenon replicated elsewhere in the world.

I do not know the full extent of sexual relations between members of the same sex in Africa in the past or in Africa or among Africans of Africa or of the Diaspora today. But I have never known of a place where such relations were not to be found, nor of any people who do not have some portion of their population, no matter how minuscule, that indulges in such practices, whether or not sanctioned by cultural or legal code. Next to apocrypha that declares the non-existence of homosexuality stands the proof transmitted through the greatest oral tradition (gossip) that indeed someone or some folks indulged in sexual practices that were not strictly heterosexual. To traverse this earth is to find the recurrent phenomenon of sexual relations between partners of the same sex. Certainly, if one travels in Africa and the Near and Middle East, one is struck by the intimacies, particularly among men, that by the standards of our modern lives indicate an intimacy and affection that while perhaps not sexual in nature, would be considered to have sexual overtones in the minds of most people reared in the non-traditional world. (Step off a plane in Dakar or Istanbul and watch how intimate the men are



Cleo Manago



as compared to the place in the West from which you have arrived, say New York or Los Angeles.) There are even undercurrents of homoeroticism in the great New World religions---Candomble, Santeria, Voodum---that are derived from the beliefs of the Yoruba.

Beyond any self-righteousness, the only thing I hoped to find at a debate on Black homosexuality was a recognition that however one may describe or analyze such a phenomenon, as an aspect of Black sexuality it is not something that we have learned or adopted from some other group of people. I was lead to study the history of Angola because I read a story about shamanism in a now defunct 1970's magazine, *Fag Rag*. Apparently, there was a group of people who had a tradition of homosexuality in the ranks of its shamans. This sparked a curiosity that led me in earnest study of the Ovimbunu of Central Angola. Surprisingly, or not so surprisingly, after years of study, I cannot recall ever seeing any proof that such men existed. There is anecdotal evidence, but very little else. But as one grows older, and sexuality and all forms of human sexual intercourse become mundane although crucial byproducts of the human experience, one's attention is turned with great certainty to how men act when that are not, to put it vulgarly, busting a nut. An historian has to cover all ground---cultural, anthropological, sociological, archeological---but it seems a terrible luxury in the context of a place such as Angola (or South Central Los Angeles for that matter) to concentrate on who is doing whom when fratricide and civil war are an infinitely greater concern. In this context, sexual expression is preferably contained in sexual acts rather than in sublimated experiences that turn desire into violence. The only real moral imperative in times of war is to know who truly is one's enemy, what one should really fear, and how to create natural alliances rather than how to destroy them.

The Vision

On that bright Saturday afternoon the week following Father's Day, the doors opened, as promised, at noon at the Vision Theater in the Leimert Village cultural enclave in the Crenshaw District. The debate, between the founder of the Black Men's Xchange, Cleo Manago, and writer/nutritionist Llaila Afrika, was to be the focus of the afternoon's events, and, given the posters that advertised the event, the only feature of the afternoon's program. But before long, it became apparent that the organizers of the debate were intent on playing for time to increase the size of the audience. The start of the debate was drawn out several hours with poetry readings, a children's martial art exhibition, and a panel discussion on the subject of homosexuality in the Black community meant to loosen us up for the "main event."

By the time the debate began some four hours after the doors opened, I had gotten a flavor for things that I would have missed if the debate had gone on at 1 PM as scheduled. For example, I talked for nearly an hour with a friend about the state of the theater we sat in. The Vision Theater is the perfect metaphor for the state of the race in Los Angeles and elsewhere. It is a huge old movie palace like the ones built on Broadway in downtown Los Angeles in the 1920's. It has a baroque interior that is badly in need of repair. When I first moved to Los Angeles, the theater was owned and operated by Jehovah's Witnesses as a convention hall. Then it was bought by television actress Marla Gibbs to be turned into an entertainment complex similar to the Apollo Theater on 125th Street in Harlem. That never happened as Ms. Gibbs lost the theatre, which is now in the hands of a local bank. It is reported that the city councilman whose district includes the area around the theater has his own ideas about the fate of the building. Not much happens at the theater anymore. There are twice monthly debates staged by a local bookstore and an occasional short-run stage production from the Urban Circuit. The facade of the Vision is seen on television once a week in the introduction of the sitcom *Moesha* and was used as the *facade of the club Chocolate City in the film A Thin Line Between Love and Hate.* The theater, should it ever be restored, renovated and put into regular use, would have the potential of being an unprecedented landmark in the South Los Angeles community (not to mention a gold mine for whoever owns it.) Instead, it sits and falls into disrepair and decay, its potential withering away while it is debated on and dickered with.

The bookstore that sponsored the debate is owned by a Muslim brother, and the Muslim emphasis on self-reliance and commerce (and security) was evident all around the theater: A Muslim market set up a catering truck in front of the theater to sell food; Muslim security frisked everyone entering the building; Muslims set up little kiosks in the hallway of the theater selling books and cassettes. Even those who took to the stage filling time before the start of the "main event" advertised something a Muslim was selling or doing.

The first person on stage, the event's emcee, was part of the poetry team, The Final Poets. On one of the tables in the lobby where *(continued on page 40)*

VIRACEPT IS POWERFUL It's tough on HIV. In many people, VIRACEPT lowered the amount of HIV in the blood to levels below the limit of detection of the test used, and substantially increased CD4 cell counts after 24 weeks of triple combination therapy. (The clinical significance of changes in viral RNA levels in blood has not been established. The virus may still be present in other organ systems.) **VIRACEPT IS EASY TO LIVE WITH** Take it three times a day with your normal meals or light snacks. **VIRACEPT IS GENERALLY WELL TOLERATED** People treated with VIRACEPT may experience some side effects; the most common is diarrhea of moderate or greater intensity in 20% of people in clinical trials. **VIRACEPT WORKS** It's indicated for the treatment of HIV infection when anti-HIV drug therapy is warranted. It is not yet known whether taking VIRACEPT will help you live

WHAT YOUR **PROTEASE INHIBITOR** CAN BE:

longer or reduce the number of infections or other illnesses that can occur with HIV. Some common medications and some HIV related medications should not be taken with VIRACEPT. For some people, protease inhibitors have been associated with the onset or worsening of diabetes mellitus and hyperglycemia, and with increased bleeding in patients with hemophilia. Ask your doctor. For more information, call toll free **1-888-VIRACEPT** or visit **www.agouron.com**. (Refer to the important information on the next page.)

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nelfinavir mesylate

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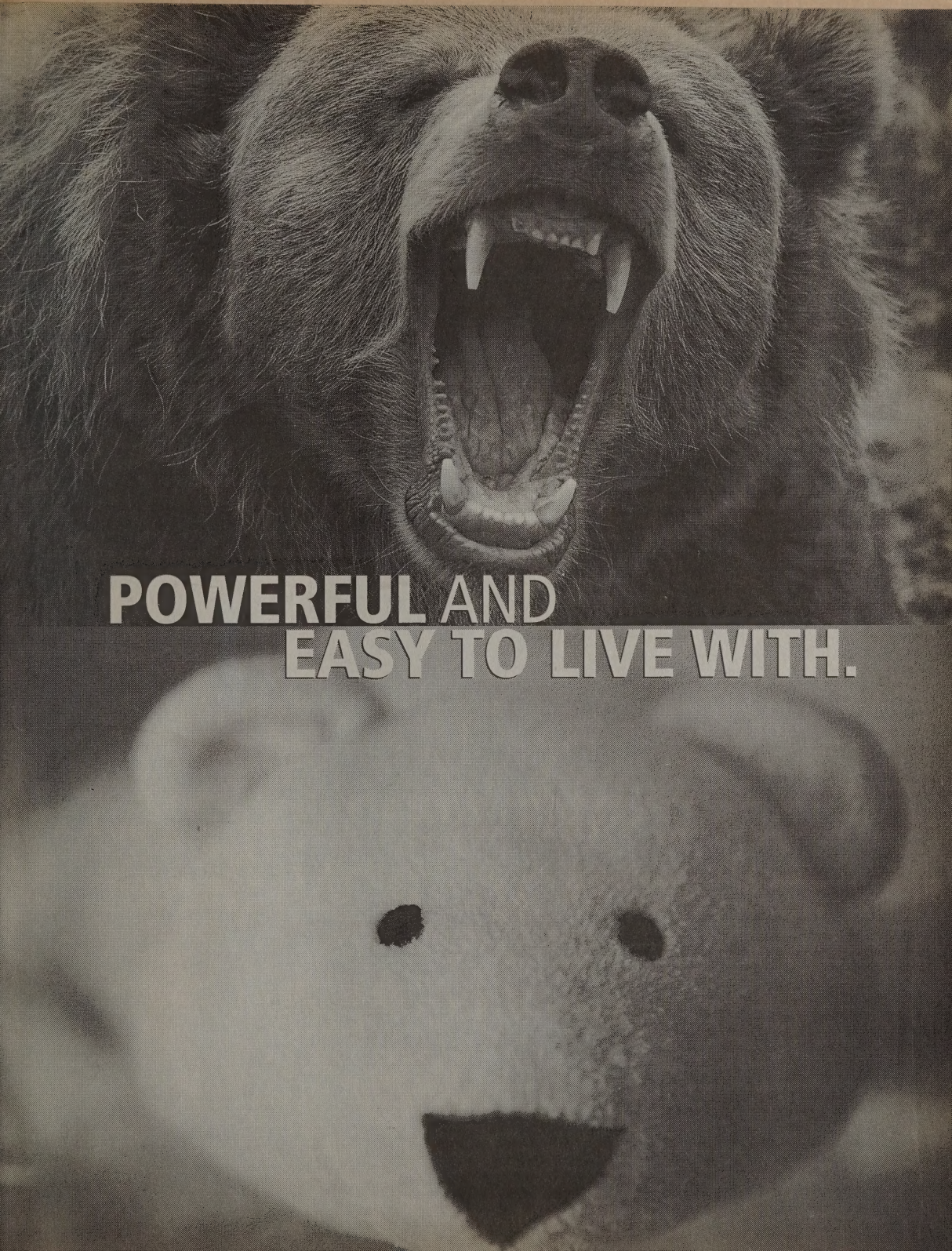
POWERFUL AND
EASY TO LIVE WITH.

VIRACEPT®
nelfinavir mesylate

Information for Patients About VIRACEPT® (VI-ra-cept)
Generic Name: nelfinavir (nel-FIN-na-veer) mesylate

For the Treatment of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Infection

Please read this information carefully before taking VIRACEPT. Also, please read this leaflet each time you renew the prescription, just in case anything has changed. This is a summary and not a replacement for a careful discussion with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss VIRACEPT when you start taking this medication and at regular checkups. You should remain under a doctor's care when taking VIRACEPT and should not change or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.

WHAT IS VIRACEPT AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

VIRACEPT is used in the treatment of people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. Infection with HIV leads to the destruction of CD4 T cells, which are important to the immune system. After a large number of CD4 cells have been destroyed, the infected person develops acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS).

VIRACEPT works by blocking HIV protease (a protein-cutting enzyme), which is required for HIV to multiply. VIRACEPT has been shown to significantly reduce the amount of HIV in the blood. You should be aware, however, that the effect of VIRACEPT on HIV in the blood has not been correlated with long-term health benefits. Patients who took VIRACEPT also had significant increases in their CD4 cell count.

VIRACEPT is usually taken together with other antiretroviral drugs such as Retrovir® (zidovudine, AZT), Epivir® (lamivudine, 3TC), or Zerit® (stavudine, d4T). Taking VIRACEPT in combination with other antiretroviral drugs reduces the amount of HIV in the body (viral load) and raises CD4 counts.

VIRACEPT may be taken by adults, adolescents, and children 2 years of age or older. Studies in infants younger than 2 years of age are now taking place.

DOES VIRACEPT CURE HIV OR AIDS?

VIRACEPT is not a cure for HIV infection or AIDS. The long-term effects of VIRACEPT are not known at this time. People taking VIRACEPT may still develop opportunistic infections or other conditions associated with HIV infection. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infections, and Kaposi's sarcoma.

It is not known whether VIRACEPT will help you live longer or reduce the number of infections or other illnesses that may occur.

There is no proof that VIRACEPT can reduce the risk of transmitting HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination.

WHO SHOULD OR SHOULD NOT TAKE VIRACEPT?

Together with your doctor, you need to decide whether VIRACEPT is appropriate for you. In making your decision, the following should be considered:

Allergies: If you have had a serious allergic reaction to VIRACEPT, you must not take VIRACEPT. You should also inform your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist of any known allergies to substances such as other medicines, foods, preservatives, or dyes.

If you are pregnant: The effects of VIRACEPT on pregnant women or their unborn babies are not known. If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant, you should tell your doctor before taking VIRACEPT.

If you are breast-feeding: You should discuss with your doctor the best way to feed your baby. You should be aware that if your baby does not already have HIV, there is a chance that it can be transmitted through breast-feeding. **Women should not breast-feed if they have HIV.**

Children: VIRACEPT is available for the treatment of children 2 through 13 years of age with HIV. There is a powder form of VIRACEPT that can be mixed with milk, baby formula, or foods like pudding. Instructions on how to take VIRACEPT powder can be found in a later section that discusses how VIRACEPT Oral Powder should be prepared.

If you have liver disease: VIRACEPT has not been studied in people with liver disease. If you have liver disease, you should tell your doctor before taking VIRACEPT.

Other medical problems: Certain medical problems may affect the use of VIRACEPT. Some people taking protease inhibitors have developed new or more serious diabetes or high blood sugar. Some people with hemophilia have had increased bleeding. It is not known whether the protease inhibitors caused these problems. Be sure to tell your doctor if you have hemophilia types A and B, diabetes mellitus, or an increase in thirst and/or frequent urination.

CAN VIRACEPT BE TAKEN WITH OTHER MEDICATIONS?

VIRACEPT may interact with other drugs, including those you take without a prescription. You must discuss with your doctor any drugs that you are taking or are planning to take before you take VIRACEPT.

Drugs you should not take with VIRACEPT:
- Seldane® (terfenadine, for allergies)
- Hismanal® (astemizole, for allergies)
- Propulsid® (cisapride, for heartburn)
- Cordarone® (amiodarone, for irregular heartbeat)
- Quinidine (for irregular heartbeat), also known as Quinaglute,® Cardioquin,® Quinidex,® and others
- Ergot derivatives (Cafergot® and others, for migraine headache)
- Halcion® (triazolam)
- Versed® (midazolam)

Taking the above drugs with VIRACEPT may cause serious and/or life-threatening adverse events.
- Rifampin (for tuberculosis), also known as Rimactane®, Rifadin®, Rifater®, or Rifamate®

This drug reduces blood levels of VIRACEPT.

Dose reduction required if you take VIRACEPT with:
Mycobutin® (rifabutin, for MAC); you will need to take a lower dose of Mycobutin.

A change of therapy should be considered if you are taking VIRACEPT with:
- Phenobarbital
- Phenytoin (Dilantin® and others)
- Carbamazepine (Tegretol® and others)

These agents may reduce the amount of VIRACEPT in your blood and make it less effective.
- Oral contraceptives ("the pill")

If you are taking the pill to prevent pregnancy, you should use a different type of contraception since VIRACEPT may reduce the effectiveness of oral contraceptives.

HOW SHOULD VIRACEPT BE TAKEN WITH OTHER ANTI-HIV DRUGS?

Taking VIRACEPT together with other anti-HIV drugs increases their ability to fight the virus. It also reduces the opportunity for resistant viruses to grow. Based on your history of taking other anti-HIV medicine, your doctor will direct you on how to take VIRACEPT and other anti-HIV medicines. These drugs should be taken in a certain order or at specific times. This will depend on how many times a day each medicine should be taken. It will also depend on whether it should be taken with or without food.

Nucleoside analogues: No drug interaction problems were seen when VIRACEPT was given with:
- Retrovir (zidovudine, AZT)
- Epivir (lamivudine, 3TC)
- Zerit (stavudine, d4T)
- Videx® (didanosine, ddI)

If you are taking both Videx (ddI) and VIRACEPT: Videx should be taken without food, on an empty stomach. Therefore, you should take VIRACEPT with food one hour after or more than two hours before you take Videx.

Nonnucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NNRTIs):
When VIRACEPT is taken together with:
- Viramune® (nevirapine)

The amount of VIRACEPT in your blood may be reduced. Studies are now taking place to learn about the safety of combining VIRACEPT with Viramune.
- Other NNRTIs

VIRACEPT has not been studied with other NNRTIs.

Other protease inhibitors:
When VIRACEPT is taken together with:
- Crixivan® (indinavir)

The amount of both drugs in your blood may be increased. Currently, there are no safety and efficacy data available from the use of this combination.
- Norvir™ (ritonavir)

The amount of VIRACEPT in your blood may be increased. Currently, there are no safety and efficacy data available from the use of this combination.
- Invirase® (saquinavir)

The amount of saquinavir in your blood may be increased. If used in combination with saquinavir hard gelatin capsules at 600 mg three times daily, no dose adjustments are needed. Currently, there are no safety and efficacy data available from the use of this combination.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF VIRACEPT?

Like all medicines, VIRACEPT can cause side effects. Most of the side effects experienced with VIRACEPT have been mild to moderate. Diarrhea is the most common side effect in people taking VIRACEPT, and most adult patients had at least mild diarrhea at some point during treatment. In clinical studies, about 20% of patients receiving VIRACEPT 750 mg (three tablets) three times daily had four or more loose stools a day. In most cases, diarrhea can be controlled using antidiarrheal medicines, such as Imodium® A-D (loperamide) and others, which are available without a prescription.

Other side effects that occurred in 2% or more of patients receiving VIRACEPT include abdominal pain, asthenia, nausea, flatulence, and rash.

There were other side effects noted in clinical studies that occurred in less than 2% of patients receiving VIRACEPT. However, these side effects may have been due to other drugs that patients were taking or to the illness itself. Except for diarrhea, there were not many differences in side effects in patients who took VIRACEPT along with other drugs compared with those who took only the other drugs. For a complete list of side effects, ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

HOW SHOULD I TAKE VIRACEPT?

VIRACEPT is available only with your doctor's prescription. The light blue VIRACEPT Tablets should be taken three times a day. VIRACEPT should always be taken with a meal or a light snack. You do **not** have to take VIRACEPT exactly every 8 hours. Instead, you can take it at normal times when you are eating.

Take VIRACEPT exactly as directed by your doctor. Do not increase or decrease any dose or the number of doses per day. Also, take this medicine for the exact period of time that your doctor has instructed. **Do not stop taking VIRACEPT without first consulting with your doctor, even if you are feeling better.**

Only take medicine that has been prescribed specifically for you. Do not give VIRACEPT to others or take medicine prescribed for someone else.

The dosing of VIRACEPT may be different for you than for other patients. **Follow the directions from your doctor, exactly as written on the label.** The amount of VIRACEPT in the blood should remain somewhat consistent over time. Missing doses will cause the concentration of VIRACEPT to decrease; therefore, **you should not miss any doses.** However, if you miss a dose, you should take the dose as soon as possible and then take your next scheduled dose and future doses as originally scheduled.

Dosing in adults (including children 14 years of age and older)
The recommended adult dose of VIRACEPT is 750 mg (three tablets) taken three times a day. Each dose should be taken with a meal or light snack.

Dosing in children 2 through 13 years of age
The VIRACEPT dose in children depends on their weight. The recommended dose is 20 to 30 mg/kg (or 9 to 14 mg/pound) per dose, taken three times daily with a meal or light snack. This can be administered either in tablet form or, in children unable to take tablets, as VIRACEPT Oral Powder.

Dose instructions will be provided by the child's doctor. The dose will be given three times daily using the measuring scoop provided, a measuring teaspoon, or one or more tablets depending on the weight and age of the child. The amount of oral powder or tablets to be given to a child is described in the chart below.

Pediatric Dose to Be Administered Three Times Daily

Body Weight Kg	Body Weight Lb	Number of Level Scoops*	Number of Level Teaspoons†	Number of Tablets
7 to < 8.5	15.5 to <18.5	4	1	-
8.5 to <10.5	18.5 to <23	5	1¼	-
10.5 to <12	23 to <26.5	6	1½	-
12 to <14	26.5 to <31	7	1¾	-
14 to <16	31 to <35	8	2	-
16 to <18	35 to <39.5	9	2¼	-
18 to <23	39.5 to <50.5	10	2½	2
≥23	≥50.5	15	3¾	3

In measuring oral powder, the scoop or teaspoon should be level.
* 1 level scoop contains 50 mg of VIRACEPT. Use only the scoop provided with your VIRACEPT bottle.
† 1 level teaspoon contains 200 mg of VIRACEPT. Note: **A measuring teaspoon used for dispensing medication** should be used for measuring VIRACEPT Oral Powder. Ask your pharmacist to make sure you have a medication dispensing teaspoon.

How should VIRACEPT Oral Powder be prepared?

The oral powder may be mixed with a small amount of water, milk, formula, soy formula, soy milk, dietary supplements, or dairy foods such as pudding or ice cream. Once mixed, the entire amount must be taken to obtain the full dose.

Do **not** mix the powder with any acidic food or juice, such as orange or grapefruit juice, apple juice, or apple sauce, because this may create a bitter taste.

Once the powder is mixed, it may be stored at room temperature or refrigerated for up to 6 hours. Do **not** heat the mixed dose once it has been prepared.

Do **not** add water to bottles of oral powder.

VIRACEPT powder is supplied with a scoop for measuring. For help in determining the exact dose of powder for your child, please ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

VIRACEPT Oral Powder contains aspartame, a low-calorie sweetener, and therefore should not be taken by children with phenylketonuria (PKU).

HOW SHOULD VIRACEPT BE STORED?

Keep VIRACEPT and all other medicines out of the reach of children. Keep bottle closed and store at room temperature (between 59°F and 86°F) away from sources of moisture such as a sink or other damp place. Heat and moisture may reduce the effectiveness of VIRACEPT.

Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. Be sure that if you throw any medicine away, it is out of the reach of children.

Discuss all questions about your health with your doctor. If you have questions about VIRACEPT or any other medication you are taking, ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. You can also call 1.888.VIRACEPT (1.888.847.2237) toll free.

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Issued 11/13/97

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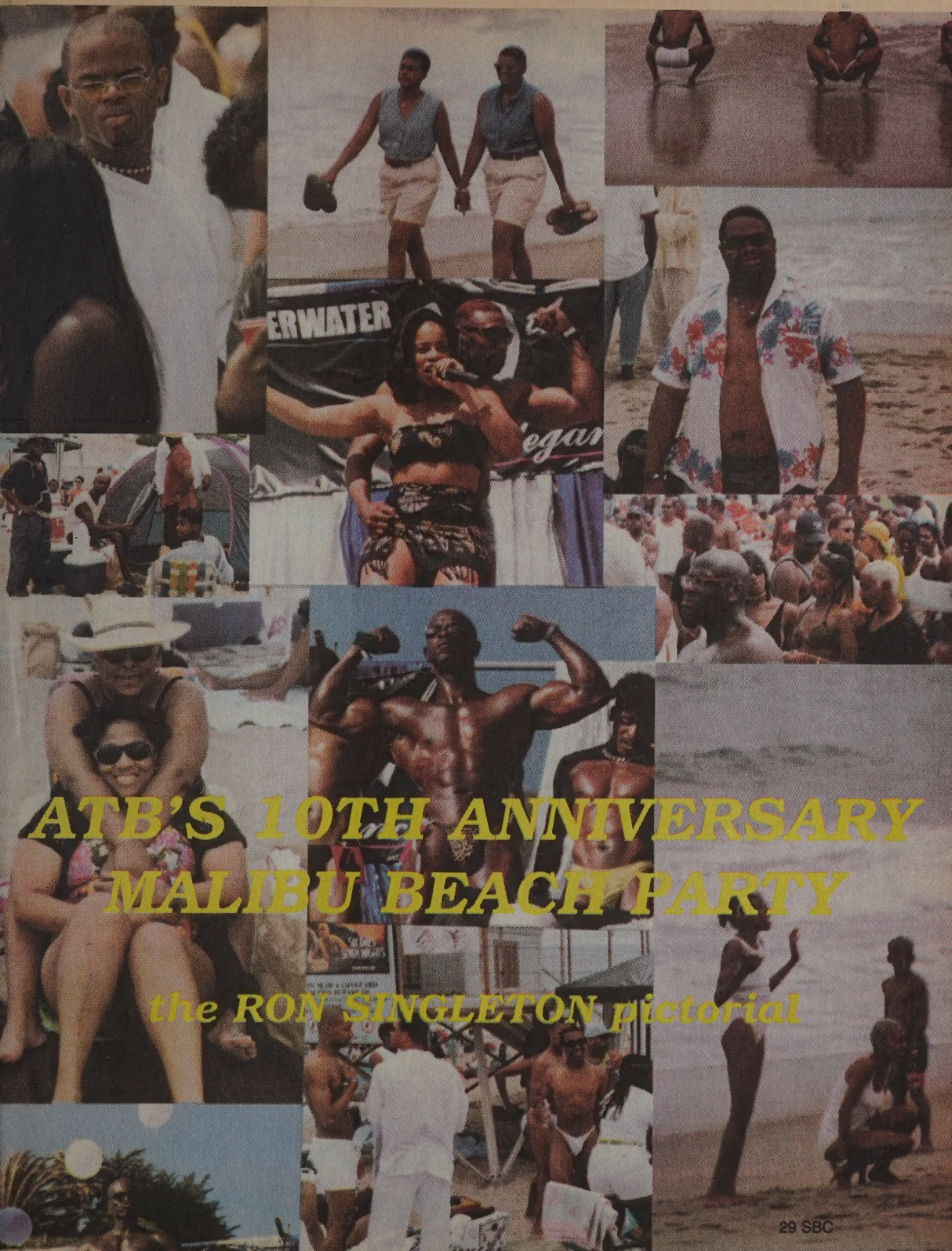
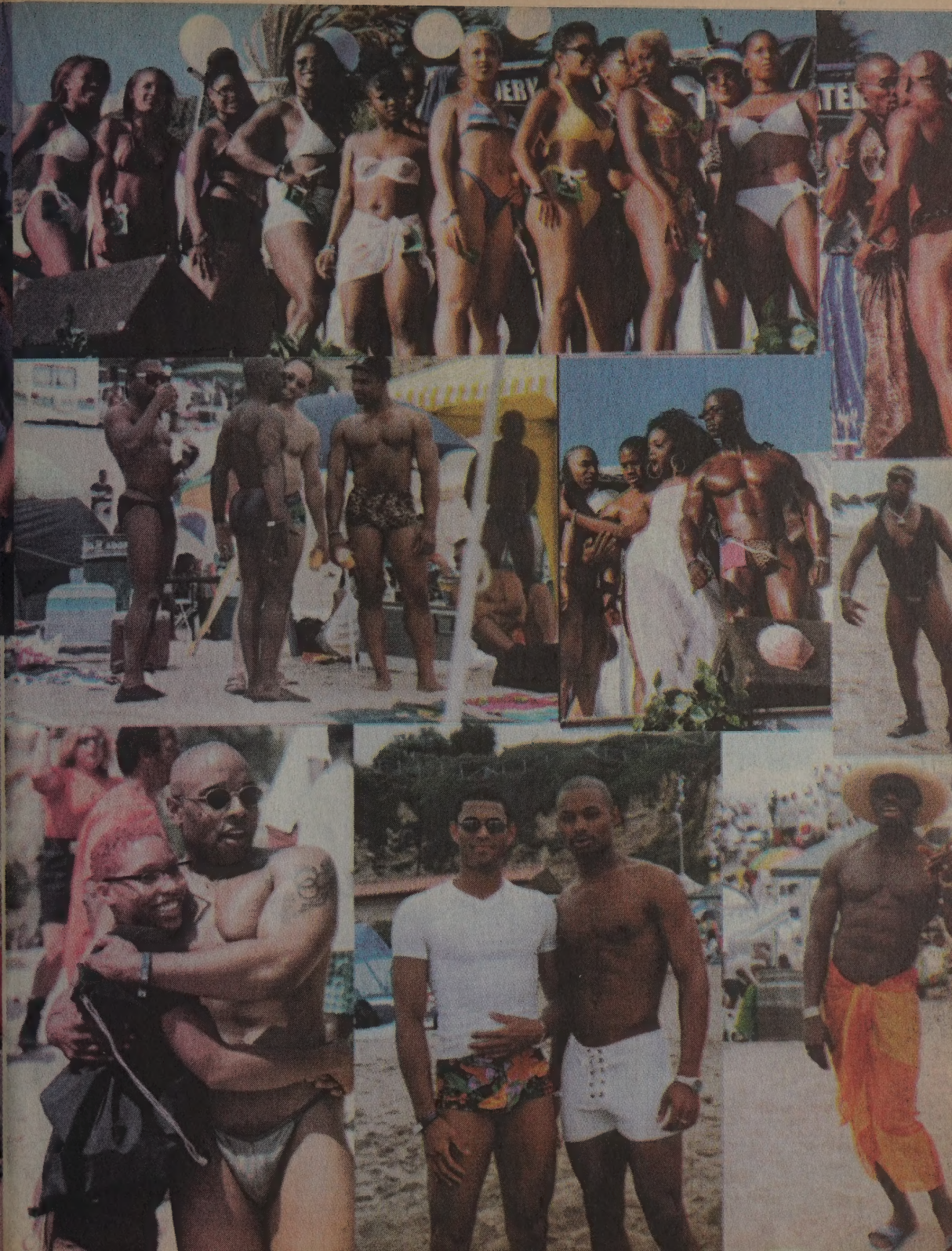
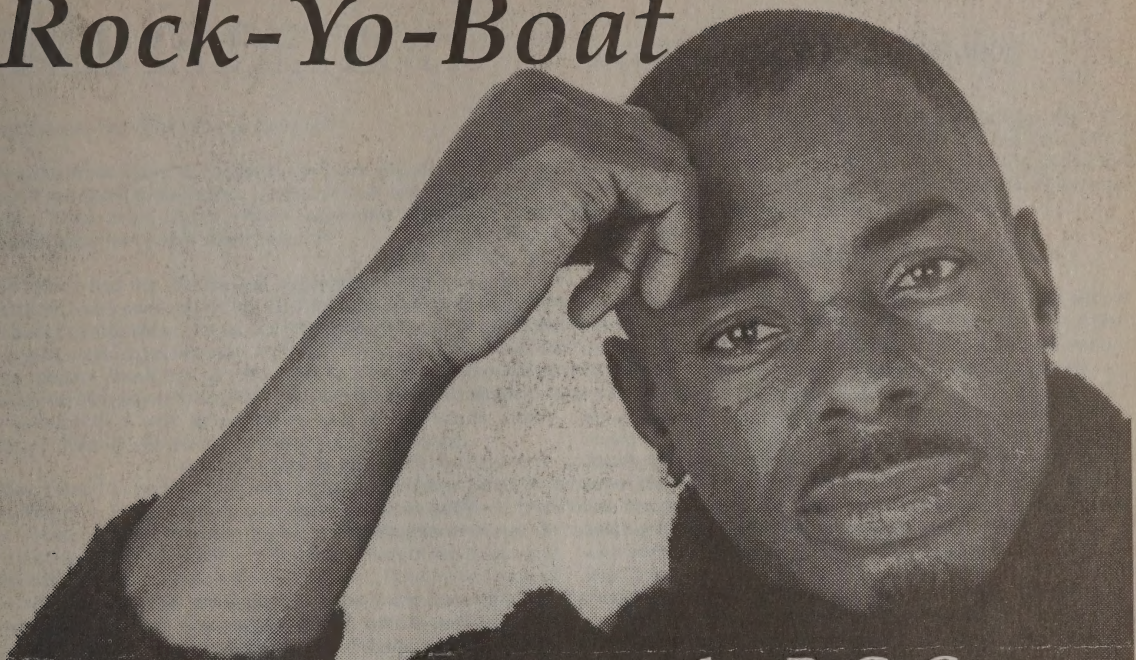


ATB'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY MALIBU BEACH PARTY

the RON SINGLETON pictorial



It's time to *Rock-Yo-Boat*



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Don't Let Me Sail Without You!

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BACK IN THE DAY

Skin-
to-skin sex, hallucinogenic
drugs, platform heels, bell bottoms pants,
universal rock and soul, black power, the women's
movement and gay liberation defined the explosive awaken-
ing that was the era of the teenage/20something baby boomers.
Their minds and hearts, like their cloths, were bold and colorful, defiant
and sassy, free, fierce, fun and frightening. Black folks were sent off to kill yel-
low folks so white folks could continue oppressing all folks. But the kids of the day
weren't having it! Burn, Baby, Burn!!!

Fucking was as natural as breathing. Anybody who wasn't getting some at least 3 times a week was a serious outcast. Swallowing cum was a protein refresher back then. The only bad dick was 'Tricky Dick', Whittier white trash slumming in the White House before a long-forgotten black security guard at the Watergate Hotel busted his ass. America belonged to the young and the young were having their way with her.

Back In the day. When across the country black and white homosexuals partied together in the same clubs because they were all forced into the same ghettos, when lines like "He had the clap so often they call him applause" was a common truism, and when more than Little Stevie Wonder, Smokey and the Miracles and a skinny little girl from The Brewster projects were helping a guy named Gordy put Detroit on the map. The Black gay scene---yeah 'gay'. Everybody who was same gender-loving was gay back then--- was alive and well in the Motor City. And six African-American homosexual men remember it well. Jerrome Butts, now 49.; 47 year olds Robert Tate, Greg Cherry and Dwayne Martin; and Cornelius Wilson and Michael Lynch, both 41. sat down recently with a 33 year old 'kid' named Curtis Lipscomb.

Lipscomb is the publisher of Kick! Magazine and various Detroit-area pride guides. He is also editorial advisor for Between The Lines newspaper, co-chair and founder of Detroit's annual black gay pride celebration, Hotter Than July, sits on the Board of Directors for Men of Color Motivational Group/Detroit, and is a known and respected activist in the homosexual community. He's the recipient of SBC's Brother of the Year Community Service Award and the Rising Star Award of the Michigan gay community. He and his partner, Mark, live in Detroit with their dog, Shadow.

In his interview with these six awesome men Curtis takes us back to that other time in Detroit---in the world---when love was a little more innocent, life was a little more precious and laughter was loud and long.

----SBC

BACK IN DETROIT

A CURTIS LIPSCOMB INTERVIEW

Curtis Lipscomb: When did you come out?

Dwayne: When I was 15, I came to my mom, told her. I struggled with it for about three years. I couldn't deal with it any more. I said, "Look mom, this is what's happening." My first [homosexual] experience was when I was 13.

Jerrome: I had my first sexual experience when I was seven. Actually, I was seduced by my cousin who was 14. It was a little experimental thing. He would take me to the attic in the summer and masturbate between my legs, and as a seven year old I was excited about the situation but, you know, it was one of those learning experiences. When I was 13, my step-brother and I learned how ... well, he taught me how to masturbate when I was 13. Then it was on! I've been doing it ever since.

When I was 13 I had my first jack-off experience by myself, and the following three years my step-bother and I would have what we called our leaky faucet. We had our leaky faucet years. So we would go into the bathroom or another part of the house and jack-off. That lasted until we were about 17. Then I was aware of my affection for men. The term "gay" was not in my vocabulary when I was seven. I was seven or eight years old when I knew that I liked boys. I believe I came out in '68, the year after I had graduated from high school. The first gay club I went to was Foster's. Yeah, because that following year, in '69, was when the Stonewall Riot in New York was going on, and then it made an impact in Detroit. I think a lot of the gays of '69 and '70, and I went to a lot of the parties on Davison Avenue near Oakman Avenue [a predominately middle-class, black, residential area] – The Compound.

Davison Avenue near Oakman Avenue. Was it a gay club?

Robert: No. It was a four-family flat.

A four-family flat?

Robert: It was an after-hours affair.

So how was it that you guys could party after hours and feel safe?

Dwayne: Because it *was* safe then. It was nothing like it is now.

Robert: It was nothing but a big party.

When did you come out Greg?

Greg: I actually came out when I was 15. I didn't know what that meant, it was just part of life. My first experience was in a garage. It was like hide and go get it, you know what I mean? My best friend and I went in to hide and seek. It started from there because I knew that I had those feelings. He knew that he had them too but he was more aggressive and more assertive than I. After that, my mother and father immediately went off. I went to them when I was 17 and I told them just like this: "There are two things that I do. I'm going to tell you just one, and that one is that I know that I'm different. They call it gay, fag, whatever you want to classify it as. You can beat me, chain me up, lock me up, but that's not going to change me."

Cornelius, why don't you tell us when did you come out?

Cornelius: I would say mid to late 20's; way after high school. It would have to have been the late 70s, early 80s. I'm thinking coming out means acknowledging it to myself and venturing into clubs. I didn't have an on-going relationship with a guy until like '83, '84. For me, it was one of those things where it was always talked about negatively, and I knew I had these feelings inside, and I knew there were certain guys in the neighborhood that liked my company. We didn't really get overly sexual, but I know that they used to love to heavy pet me. You know, I was like the neighborhood pet. Publicly I was the little punk-sissy because I was quiet and I kept to myself, but privately, if I was with some of the guys, they were over protective. "Don't mess with Corn; don't do this; don't do that; Corn, you can't do this." They would laugh at me so tough when I played basketball, so they would always come get me because they knew that I would sit on the bench like a little cheerleader. I guess my coming out process was when I met these guys.

Who are they?

Cornelius: [Pointing at table of photographs] Robert Evans, Aaron Meyers, Ken. It was at the tail end of the time that I was modeling and into the fashion thing, and I was meeting all these guys that I thought were so cool and so attractive.

Dwayne, what about you?

Dwayne: Okay. Well, I had always known ever since I was a small child that there was something different. As a matter of fact, I have an aunt that knew that I was gay at the age of five. She knew at five, and she told my parents. They tried to deny it and everything, but ten years later I confessed. I used to go with girls, but I never had any sexual desires for women. Junior [referring to himself] just wouldn't rise to the occasion. I had nothing for them. When I did come to grips with accepting who and what I was, I was about 15, and I was dating an older guy who was about 35, and I was also seeing this girl. We all belonged to the same church. So I had to sit down and come true to myself and say who I would be with.
It was in 1996 when I realized that I felt much happier with a fella than I did with a woman, sexually. Women don't turn me on sexually. I don't know why.

My mother cried after I told her, and she told my father who said the strangest thing to me. He said, "You know how it is when young boys are in the army?" I just looked at him. I don't know if it has anything to do with my being gay, but I do feel that my

father messed around because my mother said he had a lot of gay friends when they first met – a lot of them! He's a very beautiful, gorgeous man!

Michael, when was your coming out date?

Michael: My coming out date was when I was 17. So that would be in '73. I remember my first gay club was George's Inca Room Lounge on Fenkell Avenue.

Jerrome: [Turning to Michael] That's where I first met you.

Michael: They had a very strict door man---his name was Terry-- and he crowded you for ID. But it happened that the owner of the club, George, kind of liked me, so he let me slip in.

Dwayne: [Responding to Michael] And you were from the East side and so was I, and the guys on the East side were very open. If they liked you, if they wanted to get with you, they would get with you and they went on about their business.

Could you use the word gay, or what was the word?

Cornelius: Sissy, punk.

Greg: Fag.

Dwayne: I was a flaming queen. When I came out, I came out like a firecracker.

Michael: That's the way the Eastsider gays became more knowledgeable, because the gays on the East side who were out – were OUT out! They were out there. We were out!

Dwayne: La Rosa, downtown, that was the first bar that I went into, and the first crowd that I really associated with were semi-drag queens.

So if you didn't go to that one, which one did you go to?

All: Foster's.

So if you went to Foster's you were considered 'passable', and if you went to this one you were more flaming?

All: Yes. Right.

Michael: Foster's had phones in the booths. I never was allowed in there, but they had booths with phones in them so you could talk to someone at another table.

Greg: See, Foster's also had dinner, and they were on Woodward.

Dwayne: This was years ago. Now, I was 15 years old and I'm going up to the bar at La Rosa, and I would get in.

Q: What year was this?

Dwayne: This was '66. I was out of junior high school. Back then, if the owners liked you, or if you were cool with them, or if you were cute ... I had no facial hair until I was 19. I looked just like a little girl – big afro with smooth skin.

Greg: I looked totally different, with lots of hair and a very narrow trunk. See, everybody was slender then, and then it was the hip huggers, bellbottoms, and elephant legs. So if you were big, your clothes portrayed you to look smaller.

Dwayne: There was also another bar called the Barrel Bar, which was right around the corner from La Rosa. See, Monroe was the strip – the row. It was the meat-market-row. Monroe. You know where the concert hall is, towards where the bus sheds were? There used to be bars and stores all up and down there, and there used to be a theater on the corner. Now around the corner there used to be another bar called the One-on-One.

Now, here I am in high school in the 10th grade in '66. I'm walking with some of my little buddies, and we are heading to La Rosa's, and we pass club One-on-One, and out steps my English teacher. It was like he walked out of the bar, he looked at me, I looked at him; I got an A that next year, but we were cool. There was nothing said.

What about appearance?

Dwayne: Well, I didn't go to school looking flamey. I looked more conservative. I was one of the original preppies.

Jerrome: We set the fashion among the black gay males. We set the fashions for the straight boys. Even to this day, gay men set the fashion trend.

The Church.

Michael: In every major church, the tenor section was gay. [Laughter!] There was no question about it. If you had a choir and the choir could sing, the tenor section was gay. The funny thing about it is – the preachers knew, but most of the time the first drawing card of any church back then was the choir.

I just think that gay men have a personal relationship with God because of their struggles. Even in the church, there was always a set family, a mother of the church or somebody in the church who took you and loved you and let you be yourself, in spite of the fact she thought it was wrong. You went to your church, it may not have been your mother's, and you got accepted, and they didn't pay attention – they just thought it was cute. There was not a lot of gay bashing in the church. Now, the ministers would know, and they touched upon it, but they didn't lay on it.

Now we are talking about the black Baptist church?

Michael: Uh-huh. Prayer Tabernacle was on Elliott and John R. They were a spiritual church. There was St. James on Mack and Mt. Elliott. There were community choirs: Lucille Lemon, The Community Youth Ensemble, and Donald Vale Choraleers.

The church sissy, the club sissy, the house sissy, was there already a division back in the 60s or 70s about what kind of gays hung out with other gays? Were we grouped?

Robert: No, but they still have some church sissies that don't go to clubs. They stay right in that church circle, they just party amongst themselves. They may go to a house party, but you never see them in a bar.

Dwayne: When I go to church, it is the mother's board, the dea-

con and everybody else, they get on my case, "Where have you been?" There is nothing but unconditional, spiritual love in the church; and those women protected their boys. They wouldn't let anybody talk about them. I mean, our nurses, or ushers, our deaconesses, if someone from the outside comes into the church and starts talking about this is such-n-such, there is such-n-such, that's a fag and a sissy. They say, "wait a minute baby. We don't care what they are. They are our boys.

Michael, you were talking about our working hard in church?

Michael: It is something on the inside, and I don't like to say that God created us different than anybody else, but the gay man has always been a worker in the church. He has been in every capacity. If a church program was to get over in grand style [Laughter!] you can best believe that a gay man had something to do with it, from the invitations on down to the seating arrangements, to the ushers. The strongest, black usher boy in the city of Detroit came out of St. James Missionary Baptist Church, and churches patterned themselves after it, from the 70s on down, and the gospel choirs of this city, the Donald Vale Choraleers set the pattern for the standard of excellence.

Who is Donald Vale?

Michael: He was a choir director who had nine recordings, a community choir and mayored the only gospel community choir that sold out Edsel Ford Auditorium---3,000 seat---every year, the second Sunday in October. Now, this is a community choir. When it came to class and people setting precedents for how to present themselves with stage decorum and choir etiquette, the Donald Vale Choraleers set those precedents.

Dwayne: Now, for a church choir, we at St. James Missionary Baptist Church were the longest standing resident of the Henry Ford Auditorium, as far as the annual "Oh, Give Thanks Concert" goes, up until the time they closed.

Michael: The difference is they had a church to back them up, whereas this was a community choir that branched out from all different churches. Even when you stay in the church, it didn't matter the denomination, the black gay male was a workaholic. It is something about a gay man wanting to make sure that everything was right. I am an administrator of my church to this very day, and I bring on the telecast, and when they want something done right they just call on the gay man to do it right, and it is a known fact.

I want to direct this to Robert because I want to talk about the BBC [The Billionaire Boys Club, Detroit's weel known black gay male social organization] and the inspiration of gay men socializing annually. I mean, where did that come from and where did that start?

Robert: We started the club about nine years ago when Todd's Nightclub [formerly on East Seven Mile Road and Van Dyke Avenue, Detroit] closed and there wasn't any place really to go in the city. For history's sake, BBC took off when the Chieftains ended, but I learned from the Chieftains. When I came out in '72, I believe it was, when I was 22, I went to one of the Chieftains' affairs.

The Chieftains are who?

Robert: They were a black male social group. They were known as Club 500, and they had real nice affairs and parties in the city, in private homes, in the Chicago-Boston district. It was very nice, because as I was out, I was learning from them.

Did you feel welcomed?

Robert: Oh, yes.

Jerrome: I went to the same affairs. They would always have it on Sundays between two and six in the afternoon, and you would dress to the hilt. When it comes dressing to club, the guys in the 70s would get an outfit every week. The catalog was the Gentlemen Quarterly. That was our Bible! GQ Magazine.

Michael: There was another magazine called Allaganza.

Jerrome: GQ. was founded in '57 but in the late 60's that's when GQ took off in the black community. The black gay men took it as a guide for their dress.

So what, in a roomful of men, was fine?

Michael: [Laughter] A Nik Nik shirt.

Jerrome: Valine shirt, wool gabardine slacks, and if they were bells, they were very neat. I had loafers with a slight heel to them. Everything was underdone, tapered. Colognes were classic.

Michael: Aramis was a hot cologne for men.

So when you walked into the club what did the fine guy look like?

Dwayne: It depended upon what the individual considered fine. When you presented yourself, when you walked through that door of the club, you knew that all eyes were going to be on you. So you had to be totally unique, from head to toe, when you walked through that door.

There was no standard for looking?

Cornelius: No. It was how you felt. It was a one-on-one basis. It was how you made yourself look unique amongst all this uniqueness. People would come over and really complement you on various things because some people would tell you outright: "chile, I saw that shirt or those pants or that jacket. I couldn't wear that, but you're laying it out." Then next time around you may see somebody else with it, and it may not look the same on them. They could make it look good or not, but it was your own individual uniqueness amongst a whole room of unique folks.

Michael: The gym shoes were the Chuck's All-Stars. They were $9.95. [Laughter!] That was expensive then!

How do you feel about looking at these photographs [of people] placed on the table here?

Dwayne: There are a lot of people on this table I have known, I have partied with, I have loved as very dear friends, as big brothers, and it brings back a lot of memories. Some of the memories are good, but the fact that they are no longer here saddens me. I live on with the memories of the good times that we had together. [Pointing] Like Renardo, Ken, Jimmy Lockhart, Johnny Bradley, I knew him when I was about eight or nine years old. I knew him through his mother. There are other peo-

ple on this table that I have known for years. I see the concert book from Harold Smith and Majestic. They bring back a lot of memories. [Pointing] Aaron Meyers, Robert Evans, Kenneth Jenkins. You know, these are people that I have had very good times with.

Michael: Something else about these people I have noticed here, they were lime-light people. Johnnie Bradley was in promotions, public relations. He had a picture with everybody, Billy Dee Williams, everybody. He lived in The Compound. Renardo White and Jimmy Lockhart were two of the first DJs this city knew! [This is before the popular DJ, the Late Ken Collier, affectionately known as The Godfather] These two gentlemen started it all. Renardo White played at Todd's, and his sign off was "Let's Go!" You knew then that was the end of it. He played a slow record, you got to social the last call. Jimmy Lockhart broke into the era when the DJs really, really started coming out, about 1971, because before then it was "Quarter in the Jukebox."

Was Foster's a "quarter in the jukebox?"

All: Yes. Everybody played the jukebox.

How did you dance?

Michael:They had a dance floor, you put your quarter in, and you got your two selections, and you got up and danced. What we have now is the circle. What we had then was the walk. They would hit the wall off of [a song called]"Stormy Monday," and they still play it. [Sung] *"They call it Stormy Monday, but Tuesday is just as bad ..."* and then they would hit the wall and go serenade back to the other wall and "bam" hit the wall. They would clear the floor to see that. Oh, yes, and they had walkers, like they have circle kickers, like they say kickers, they had wall walkers.

I want to talk about these men, you say they were involved in promotions?

Michael:Aaron Meyers, his sister was [singer] Alicia Meyers who made that hit record ["I Want To Thank You"]. Of course, you know the Godfather. Some of these people were models and things of that nature. It's funny how it happens to be that way when I see these people.

Cornelius: It suggests that our community has always been progressive and been out there doing things, because a lot of the clubs and things they are talking about, I avoided. I ventured into the gay club initially under the modeling thing, hanging with what I thought were straight kids going to white clubs where everybody was free and open minded. So a couple of buddies and I went, and you know how you sometimes go out and you ask a girl to dance and she didn't want to dance, well hell, she could sit there. My buddy and I would go out there and we would dance the night away. So for me, it was the white clubs initially that eventually became more black orientated: Todd's, Menjo's, Gagins, GiGi's.

The first time I went into the Famous Door Nightclub was just total happenstance. I knew it was a gay club; I was downtown picking up a prescription one Friday on a popular night at Kensels Drug Store. They told me it was going to be 20 minutes before the prescription was ready which was too much time to sit right there and wait, but not enough time for me to go all the way home and turn around and come right back. So I saw all these people going into this club. Now I knew this was a gay club, but this particular night I happened to see a group of women going in. "Women going in? It must not be all gay." So I strolled my ass on down there and I lied to the guy at the door, the guy with the big Afro, named Lewis. I told him I was looking for somebody. He told me okay you can go on up in there, but if and when you find your person, I want my $2.00 cover charge. It was real interesting for me how I discovered the gay clubs, because I began to see a lot of the men that I thought were so attractive in the fashion shows, at some of these parties I used to go to in these gay clubs, and I was like, Ugh? It took me a while to warm up to it because when they saw me they started ducking and hiding, because it was like "Oh, man, Cornelius is up in here, he is going to go back and tell everybody," because I was known for being open minded, but they didn't know whether I was gay or not.

Greg: If you noticed, everybody in this room has actually lived and grown up with each other. We have watched each other grow.

That was probably one of the most profound things that was said tonight. That's right! You did all grow up together!

Greg: As you saw everybody's reaction when they came into this room and they looked on this table, each one of us knows everybody down there, it had to be something else for you to sit here and ask us questions and watch our reactions at the same time; because each one of us, I know, had a devastating shock because now we have our past that we had feelings for back in our face. We have all these memories and all these good times together. Did you see how I walked out of this room and stayed out of here for about 20 minutes? Because I had all these feelings that I thought died. They hadn't died. I was actually feeling them and then being in this room with everybody that is still alive.

Do you have guilt?

All: No.

Michael: No. I stayed in a group with my closest running buddies, and we used to talk about who was going to out-live each other and what to do, and who was going to carry the torch.

When was this?

Michael:This was in the late 80s. We would say "you know, one day we are not going to be here like this" because this dreaded disease had just started coming about, and the first person that ever really hit the major scene that died of AIDS, and was popular, was Renardo White.

That was the DJ.

All: Yes.

Michael: It was like this epidemic started in Detroit with Renardo White. This was like in '85.

Greg: And then Jimmy Lockhart.

Michael: It was '84 because everything was kind of hush, hush. On the down low.

Jerrome: They had a rope around his casket.

Was it closed?

Jerrome: No, because they were ignorant about AIDS.

Michael: People didn't really want to say that word, but when it was Renardo's time, they even said that they had his black book that was being circulated through the Detroit Public Health Department [and] that you were going to get called if your name was in this book.

Cornelius: I remember that.

Robert, how do you feel; do you have any guilt?

Robert: No. Looking back at the past and remembering all these people I partied with and had forgotten until I saw their pictures brings back good memories of our being together back then.

Cornelius: I remember a lot of these people I knew, but a lot of these fellas I saw and didn't know personally, like Jerrome [Butts]. I used to see Jerrome all the time, but never met him. Michael [Lynch] was one of the first people that I met.

Michael: I also wanted to make a point that was brought up. We had mentors, and my godfather. If I was in the club and I danced, my third record was it. The fourth record, he would yell sharply "Sit your hot tail down! Cool off; have your orange juice and grenadine." And I had to sit down for the next two hours. If I was sweating he'd say, "Go beat your face. Go sit on the patio, cool down, and then you come back in here."

How old were you?

Michael: Seventeen.

And how old were they?

Michael: Twenty-four.

Dwayne: Now when I started going out to the clubs, I was more adventurous than most of you guys were. I would sit back and observe what was going on around me, then I would get involved. I was never one to follow any rigid rules or regulations. I had no mentors. I was on my own with everything I did.

Did you want to be on your own?

Dwayne: No. I wanted to be part of this inner circle, but for some reason or another I never could become part of the inner circle.

Why do you think?

Dwayne: I don't know.

Q: Were you afraid?

Dwayne: No. It was just that I was not accepted. I was very outspoken and out there.

Going back to the clubs you were mentioning, if you were out there, what was everybody in the clubs like; what made you feel that you weren't a part?

Dwayne: Well, there were certain groups of people you were with; your friends, your running buddies. I could be at the Famous Door, I would be upstairs looking down from the balcony by myself. The next thing I knew I had a crowd around me.

Cornelius: See, I can relate to that.

Dwayne: I can be around people, but still I'm by myself.

Let's talk about lovers. How was the environment for two men to want to commit together and yet still socialize in the 60s and 70s?

Dwayne: I can recall back then in the 70s when I was out of high school, I was out there, and role playing was the issue. Either you were a top or a bottom.

What determined that?

All: Your masculinity.

Your appearance or behavior?

All: Both.

So you were a bottom and a known bottom?

Greg: Everybody in this room could be a known bottom or a top.

Dwayne: As far as lovers then, I was learning. I was becoming more aware of who I was and what I liked sexually. Also, there was a drug culture going on then. So I had an extremely high sex drive. It was mescaline and debs. I was on to amphetamines, anything to keep me up and going.

What about coke?

Dwayne: No. Coke was very elite. You had to be in the very elite crowd to use cocaine back in the 70s. In the 80s it became cheaper.

So you walked into the room, and you were a known bottom to all your attractions. Now, what was the dance like?

Cornelius: Oh you're talking about body language.

Dwayne: The same as it is now. What's your name; who are you with; what are you drinking; what are you doing when the bar closes?

Was that conversation?

Dwayne: Within the course of that evening, that is what the conversation was, and if they liked you, you would know. They would be with you all night long and you would leave the club with that person. Now, if you didn't leave the bar with somebody, you hit the strip.

And the strip was?

Greg: Downtown on Monroe or on Woodward and 6 Mile.

Did you walk or drive?

Dwayne: I didn't have a car so I walked.

So the person you were attracted to was a top. Were the tops in one area of the bar and the bottoms in another part?

All: No. Everyone was together.

Greg: It was no different yesterday than it is today.

Dwayne: But you already had an idea for yourself. It was something that you sensed when you picked up a person. If that person was interested in you you would know.

Michael: I got guys who were tops. They were really a lot more masculine than they are now – a lot more masculine. I mean, the clothes were not as flamboyant back then, because it wasn't as acceptable as it is now. So your clothes, tone, and your mannerisms were more masculine in the club. They weren't kicking. They weren't dancing. They were cool and laid back. They would drink; send you a cocktail; you knew.

So Robert, let me ask you. You got a boyfriend, you got a lover; you meet him at Foster's or in the nightclub and ...

Robert: Well, I've only had one lover.

And who was he?

Robert: His name was Charles and we were together about five years. I guess I must have been about 25 or 26.

What year was that?

Robert: '75 or '76. He was at the Chessmate. I was tired and I left him there, and that caused all the problems right then and there. I guess that's how come I don't go to after-hours now, because that is where our problem was. He met somebody and then I had to go to divorce court. [Laughter!]

You laugh, but please talk about it.

Robert: It was hard back then. It took me a long time to say that I really wanted to get involved with somebody, but I haven't really done it in the last nine years since the start of BBC.

When you were off the record before, we talked about the young and the older ...

Robert: I'm the oldest in our club [BBC], and so I would invite my older friends to a party where my younger club members would invite their friends and then there would be an interaction with a variety of ages to keep my age group alive. I've been to the clubs and been the oldest thing there, but it didn't faze me because I am out there so much. It's just like I forget my age.

Dwayne: I'm the same way because I refuse to let my age get me down. Age is only a number. You'll see me out on the dance floor sweating and having a good time!

Do you feel that your age is a plus or minus in the dating scene?

All: It has become a plus.

Dwayne: It becomes a plus to us because of our life experiences, no matter how, or at what age, or what time we came out.

Do you think you are playing a daddy figure?

Dwayne: Yeah.

Robert: No.

Others: No.

Cornelius: I don't mind it. What gets on my nerves is when I'm not trying to play a daddy figure [and] they view me as daddy. There is a certain level of maturity that I think they want to relate to, and think they can't get to because there are a lot of older guys trying to be like them, to get with them. Being with a lot of young people, teaching or working around them or whatever, most of them say that they don't care for guys their age. They seem to respect me. I guess it's something they look for when it comes to having true friends, like stability, maturity, conservativeness, and the ability to be just who you are all the time regardless of the setting. They look for that as opposed to some of their peers who are queen for today, butch tomorrow, saints in church and devils on the street. That's just too many things. And I see it within our group, [Men of Color, Detroit]. Most of the guys appear to slant more towards the masculine image. But then I have heard several of the little guys saying, "I got to be this way when I go to church; I got to be this way when I go to school; and I got to be this way when I come down here." The only thing I can say is that you make the final decision as to how you got to be, whatever you are, where ever you are.

Do you think men over 40 like being around men over 40, or rather being around younger men?

Cornelius: I like people. Age is not an issue for me, under or over 40. If we are communicating and we can hit it off – fine. If we can hit it off, I don't care if you are a 140 or a negative 40.

So you've been out with no pre-set judgments.

Cornelius: Yes.

Even when dating?

Cornelius: Well you know dating is different.

Okay. What about dating and social?

Robert: I find that I lean toward the younger crowd because it seems like someone my age is looking for somebody.

How does looking at the younger generation make you feel?

Robert: It keeps me youthful I think.

Michael: But if you go out to the club scene you are not going to meet people your age if you are our age. They are just not out. Been there, done that. So quite naturally that leaves you attracted to the younger men.

Robert: My surrounding is mostly people much younger than I am, although I keep in contact with my older friends. But my life is based around younger people.

Do you think it is out of the young man's admiration of you?

Jerrome: I think so. Great respect.

Michael: I think it *is* admiration.

A lot of black gay youth say they are prayed upon, they are not taken seriously, or they are sexual items used for pleasure.

Michael: They are not taken seriously because, as we sit around this table, who at 25 and under was really, really seriously thinking about having a life-long relationship? Few and far between. When I was that age, living with a man for the rest of my life was not in my vocabulary. That was a dream. That was not what my goal was. To have somebody, yes, but I never met anybody that I said 'well, it's time to slow down' until I got older.

Robert: When I look at somebody that young, I know I can't have a relationship with them because I'm about the same age as their mother or father.

Let's talk about contemporary black gay culture.

Jerrome: I think it's fabulous! There is an openness. Since the Stonewall era there has been a black awareness. Black men are talking with each other and not at each other. There is no more of this overwhelming masculinity and femininity, it is all about we are all bothers.

Dwayne: I feel much better about black gay culture now than I did 20 years ago, for the mere fact that we have become united, even though we are not as united as the white gay culture.

Jerrome: [Directed toward Dwayne] That's your opinion.

Dwayne : Okay, but we are more united. You don't *hear* more about our being united, but that's what it is. By being a part of Men of Color I have seen the unity and the fellowship and the unconditional love that we all share, and it is the best thing that has happened to me in my life – period! This past Hotter Than July event was our third annual. It was the buzz of the city.

Jerrome: Of the country!

Dwayne: I mean I had been telling everybody. I got my mom to come, and my aunt. I mean I got people who I would never invite to come to something, to come to the picnic, because I am black and I am gay and I'm proud.

Michael: I felt that the community was more closely knit when I was younger. There was no MOC but I was still mentored by the older women or the older gay men. I was constantly schooled on right and wrong.

People fought, but then the worst fight was with a razor blade. You didn't have all this killing with guns. A fight was just a fight – a street fist-fight, and that was it.

You walked home in groups and made sure the person got close to their house even if you had to go a few blocks out of the way. Wherever there was a group they made sure the individual got home. The violence wasn't there, and to me the club scene was a lot better, and I enjoyed the music more.

There are more avenues for gay men today, and they don't take advantage of it. If it's not a pick-up joint or somewhere you can get a man, they don't have any interest. I think that's sad, and they want to say that all the older guys feel the youth are preyed upon as bed warmers. I don't think that's fair.

Robert: Back when I was coming out, I enjoyed it. Although I didn't have a mentor, I stood back and I observed, and I think I learned from observing. That brings me to today and being involved with the club [BBC]. I think what the club tried to do is show the younger generation that there are other things to do besides the bar.

Cornelius: That was the purpose for starting what is now MOC [Men of Color Motivational Group/Detroit, a black gay men's support organization]. A group of us started getting together back when Todd's closed, and prior to my going to work at CHAG [Community Health Awareness Group] as a staff person, there were eight or nine of us, mostly men, sometimes one or two women who were good friends with somebody. We just got tired of going down to the Famous Door and Shoppers or whatever and seeing the same faces; same old shit. Just about everybody had lovers except me and one or two other people. Instead of meeting up at other people's houses to go to clubs, we decided to meet at people's houses and do just like what we are doing here. We sat around; we bought pop, something to munch on, and before we knew it, it was 1, 2, 3 in the morning. All we did was have great conversations about anything that anybody put out there. Nobody was too embarrassed. There were women that talked about their fantasies of their boyfriends getting with certain guys. There were guys talking about their fantasies about having their lover and a female. I mean, just a little bit of everything, and that began to evolve into where a couple of guys asked how can we do this on a larger scale? So we tried the late-night party deal, where there would be the dance thing. You know, the after-hours dance thing.

Dwayne: After I had gotten into my 40s, I began to re-evaluate who and what I was because I was growing and I was going nowhere. I had to become true to myself. I knew what I was, but I hadn't become true to myself.

What do you mean you were going nowhere?

Dwayne: I mean, I was going through the same cycle – going to the club. I had to be progressive. I had to be a part of something that was growing constantly, that is doing something different. I'm the type of person that has to share my knowledge with others. I can't keep it all to myself. At work, a year ago, I started telling everybody that I am a proud African-American gay man, very proud, and I would stand my ground. Now that I have become a part of the MOC I am very proud; and I will tell you in a minute 'yeah I'm gay, but I'm also a man, an African-American man.' This is part of coming true to myself after all these years. As long as I have been out, I have become honest with who I really am. Even though it has taken that long for me, but I am true to who I am, and will stand toe to toe with anybody. If you don't like it, you don't stand it, that's your problem.

Michael: Now Curtis, somewhere down the line, there will be another Curtis Lipscomb in a room something like this, with the youth of the day, and to those youth there, today will be the good-old-days to them; and they will have some of the same stories and be able to relate to some of the things that we do now, because it is their youth, and it is what they are now, and this will go on and on and on.

The key word is progression, because as long as that happens, you can fight and make up, you can loose and then win, you can fail and then succeed, but it is still progression.

HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY (cont'd from page 25)

books were being sold I had noticed the books and tapes of The Final Poets who turned out to be a father and son. The son, a lanky teenager of about sixteen or seventeen, after being introduced by his father, came to the speaker's podium set up at the front of the stage. (Behind him, on his left and right were tables where the first panelists would sit during a panel discussion and then the debate principals would follow.) The young man, named Augustus, was nattily attired and brimming with energy. He read and elegy to Black women that was a crowd pleaser. In an audience divided between angry and self-righteous heterosexuals and defensive and combative homosexuals, his poem, although a paean to heterosexual love and honor, drew thunderous applause from both camps. It was the first tip that the participants at the debate, regardless of their positions, their preferences, orientations or lifestyles, were all drawing from the same well of scorn and ridicule heaped on Black people in these modern times. There was virility in the young man's stance and it symbolized the defiance of the race; there was hope in both his clean image and the vigorous if strident cadence of his speech.

The Final Poets were followed first by an invocation by a Muslim cleric, a Christian Minister and an African Spiritualist; then by teenager Augustus, represented hope. Their lives, training and young discipline were a stark departure from that of most of our children in the African-American community. These young children became a talking point of several of the panelist who took part in the discussion that followed the kids' time on the stage. Inevitably, coldly and with a propagandist's obvious calculation, one of the panelist ask: *Would you want your young kids who were just up here to learn to be homosexual?*

Race, Religion, The Politics of Procreation, and The Sexual Jigsaw

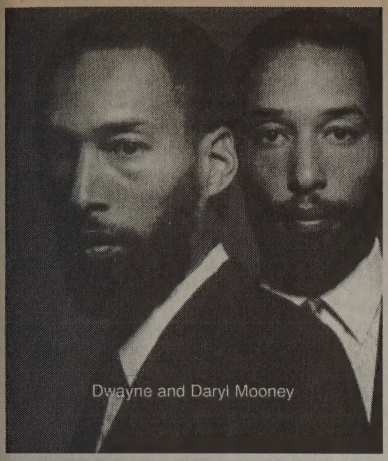
The panel discussion that preceded the debate was enlightening in parts and provocative throughout. Moderated by a local radio host, it gave several opinionated individuals a chance to make their positions known. All of the panelists with the exception of two comedians and a social activist were clerics or would-be clerics. There was not a scientist or social scientist in the crew. The first panelist who took the stage was Reverend Victoria Lee Owens, an African Spiritualist and Minister in the Women's Church of Crenshaw Square who had given part of the afternoon's invocation. Everything about Reverend Owens (called Reverend Victoria throughout the discussion by the moderator and everyone else) said "mother of the church." She was followed by Reverend Colin Akridge, a Church of God in Christ Minister, who one can only politely say looked like a preacher. (He had also given part of the invocation.) On the same dais as sat Reverend Victoria were added the Mooney Twins, sons of comedian Paul Mooney who have made a name for themselves in the Los Angeles area as self-described "conscious comedians." Then to a table flanking the other side of the stage first came Charles Hamilton who was introduced as an alumni of Yale University who had edited a campus journal dedicated to deconstructing white supremacy. Next to the second table came Firpo Carr, head of a local nonprofit organization, who was referred to by the moderator as *Doctor* Carr although, according to the moderator himself, Carr is a theology student merely working toward a doctoral degree at a university that was not named. The final panel entrant, a Pastor Russell of the Mary Magdalene Baptist Church, who was described as a graduate of the University of Jesus Christ; stood close to seven feet tall and strode across the stage with a Bible in hand.

The first question given to the panelist was *Is homosexuality Genetic*? Firpo Carr answered, emphatically, "Absolutely not. It is not genetic at all according to all the experts...They say that it is a learned behavior." If it were genetic, since most people are not "that way," Carr stated it would be "like some other genetic disease that needs a cure." Reverend Victoria, obviously annoyed, countered, that she was not a genetic disorder, that she was as God made her, and that her God did not make mistakes. Charles Hamilton, level-voiced, asked that people consider that in a world so "beautiful with variety" God would not create us all the exact same way, and urged people to use their intuition in considering what homosexuality is. Dr. Carr, in dulcet tones, rebutted,

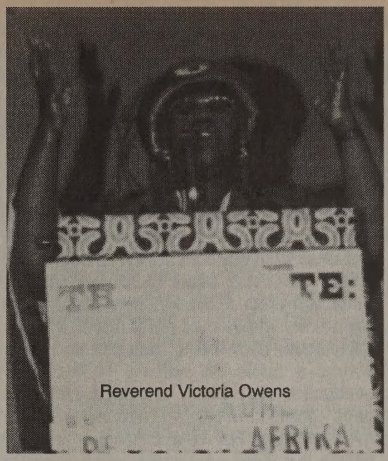
"Male penetration has long been a focus of taboo because it is seen to make a man the equivalent of a woman, and since the status of women has been so low the act becomes tantamount to an abdication of man hood and male status."

Malik, owner of Malik's bookstore (the debate's sponsor), who welcomed everyone and commended each and all for having the courage to attend such an event. He also thanked us for our patience as we awaited the afternoon's "entertainment." I though his description of a serious debate as "entertainment" curios, but by 2:30, having seen hide nor hare of the debaters, it was not a point to belabor. Malik introduced a group of schoolchildren from a Muslim day care who, dressed in matching uniforms, sang songs and engaged in martial art exercise. Everyone in that room, Muslim and non-Muslim, knew why those young kids, like the

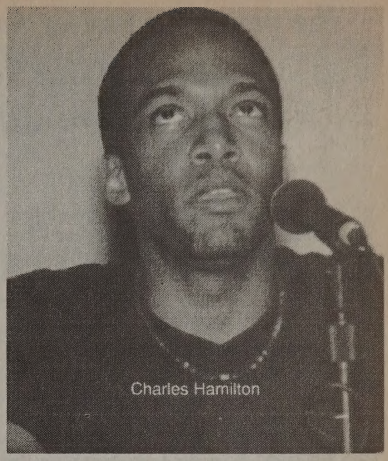
"That's very interesting, but if God doesn't make any mistakes, how would you explain the child that is born retarded. Or more correctly, how would you explain the child with Down's Syndrome?...No it is not that there is a mistake on God's part, it's just that we are all born in imperfection. The fact of the matter is homosexuality is not a genetic disease, or pardon, is not genetic at all. You will notice whenever anyone answers that question, quite frankly...whenever anyone is gay or who is homosexual answers that question, most of them will revert to emotionalism. They'll say, oh that's just how I feel. That's just how I am. Well, you have some individ-



Dwayne and Daryl Mooney



Reverend Victoria Owens



Charles Hamilton

"Every important wave of bigotry in human history has found an intellectual apologist. Hitler fomented anti-Semitism, but it was the learned and suave Dr. Goebbels who legitimized it in the minds of many by giving it a patina of intellectual rectitude."

my young brothers and sisters to that." Carr's rebuttal to Reverend Victoria was also not the definition the moderater had solicited, and it was not a logical rebuttal to Reverend Victoria who had stated unequivocally we must not condemn any of our people to premature death and misery. Carr eventually got around to giving a definition, or as close a definition of homosexuality as he could, by treating us to words from the Bible, words that had to do with role playing and gender bending, that I presume were Hebrew, or perhaps Greek, or perhaps had something to do with the slang expression "Greek" ("as far as the Greek is concerned," he said). Carr took pains to show he was not being condescending. "I know those are words...I'm not trying to show off or anything like that. I'm just telling you what the Greek text says." He went on to make a comparison between the presumed active and passive partner in a male homosexual encounter and drew a comparison between scripture and prison lore, which holds that the active partner is not homosexual. "Both [the active and passive partner]," he said, "are condemned in scripture."

Carr began to remind me of an old fashioned white Southern racist. When he accused homosexuals of always relying on emotional responses to questions about homosexuality, it reminded me of something whites would say to Blacks on the subject of race: You're being so emotional." He was using the practice theologians call exegesis to condemn homosexuals. He obviously does not believe that it is sacrilegious to use holy text to put forward a political agenda. The profane never do, and Carr was not to be deterred from his Biblical recitations. When other panelists mentioned the origin of the King James Bible, he let us know that he, Firpo Carr, had read the original Dead Sea Scrolls and (presumably) found hidden text---apocrypha he called it---to back up his condemnation of homosexuality. Showing a highly selective use of argument, Carr failed to enlighten us as to the other meaning of apocrypha: of dubious origin, not authentic.

I have often lamented the fact that people of African descent do not have a long written tradition, but there are times when eternal truths speak louder than any word put on parchment, a material that has a short shelf life in the tropics where our race more or less originated. Here was Carr relying on Jewish history to instruct us as to celestial authority. I was impressed, impressed indeed: but not nearly as impressed as I would have been if he had told me he had read something in an African language Gheez, the ancient Ethiopian language in which the first Christian manuscripts were translated. I would have been impressed if he had told me what apocrypha lay therein. I would have started shouting and getting happy like Rosetta Stone. If Carr were not so dangerous he would be funny. And perhaps to some he is.

The next person to speak, one of the Mooney Twins, Daryl, addressed what I was thinking: "[That] the scriptures are being used to condemn homosexuality reminds me of the time not too long ago when the scriptures were used by white folks to condemn Black people. Now I hope...we pray that this whole event can create some understanding and some compassion for us all because if we are in an army, and we have an army full of heterosexuals and homosexuals and the enemy came to the camp to attack us, and then half the homosexuals and half the heterosexuals fell down because of fear, the homosexuals and the heterosexuals left standing [are] the team we've got to deal with at that time. The ones that fall we gotta let them go. They're all family, but the ones who are going to stand up and fight white supremacy no matter what your sexual preference...in fact, y'all, get up out of folks' business anyway...Being so concerned with what they doing in the bedroom...I don't even want y'all to know what I'm doing in the bedroom and I *do* love sisters, but I *do* have a hard love for all my brothers and sisters and I feel that we must come together."

Dwayne Mooney added to what his brother said. "The whole thing is, homosexuality is real, and we have some folks, some leadership in our community that are scared to come out of the closet because they would not be backed up and supported if they told you who they really were. That's just reality. Can a homosexual be your friend? I believe a homo can be your homey. They got love. They care. And it's not even they. They are a part of the community and we got to wake

The panel discussion was proof positive that on the issue of Black homosexuality, we are not of one mind, but it also showed how united most Black people are in our very real concern about the survivability of our race

up. Every time we use religion and we pray to a male god, I have problems with that because ain't nobody said that the universe is just male. The universe is male and female. Whether they be homosexual or straight, Black men need to deal with their feminine energy that's locked up inside of them anyway. You will find out that you don't have to be so hard, so macho, [because] in a lot of ways, all that don't work. I got to get my gun, get my gatt. We see these gangbangers using these guns and you know the gun represents the penis. All they doing is they shooting each other. We talk about same gender loving people committing suicide. It's the young brother drinking a 40 ounce, killing each other every day. That's genocide. That's suicide. We got some serious problems in this community and we cannot just blame it on folks that sleep with their same sex."

Pastor Akridge in effect seconded what the Mooney Twins and Reverend Victoria had said about the need for love in the community. He admitted that he did not think that homosexuality was the greatest evil, comparing it with heterosexual adultery, etc..., but he said that all types of sins, when it comes to sexuality, is wrong, and he urged on people what he called a "correct behavior." After he equated homosexuality with a list of evils, he said, "Therefore, even bringing up the other issue about race and all, 'bout the white man coming to get the brothers and sisters...we not even worried about what he is doing right now. We need to be concerned about our morals that we practice in our community, are they right, and are they uplifting to all of us in there. Because I know myself from the Biblical standpoint, I could not teach my young child, whether it be female or male; that if you're a girl go let another woman lick all over your body, if you are a male, go let a man put his penis in your anus. All that's wrong. But you can debate all you want. But you have to deal with this thing from a moral issue."

Charles Hamilton's rejoinder to what had been said was this: "First of all, the only reason we are here is that we are all Black. So we need to talk about race because we need to be thinking collectively. No matter what your opinion is on this---and I think that one of the byproducts of some same gender loving people feeling excluded from the Black community is we take our extraordinary talents and energies and feel like we have to run away from this community. I'm not one of those folks. I've been Black forever and Black is my issue, Black peoples' issues are my issues, whether it's reparations, whether it's James Byrd being dragged to death behind a truck. So we are in this room because we are Black, not because we all have some interesting fascination with homosexuality. But we're interested in how it affects the Black community and so am I. I am as concerned about our genetic survival, if not more so, than white people are concerned about theirs...But let me clear up one thing. The suicide issue is not just because people are homosexuals. People are committing suicide because they've already been told they're going to hell, [figuring since] I've been mistreated by my family, what reason do I have to live."

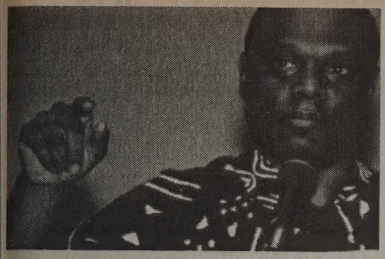
This is not the place to provide an entire transcript of either the panel discussion or the debate. Tapes and video copies of the debate are being sold and circulated all over the city, and I am told, all over the country. It is hard not to continue giving a blow-by-blow of a discussion that was as no-hold barred as it promised to be. The panel discussion was proof positive that on the issue of Black homosexuality, we are not of one mind, but it also showed how united most Black people are in our very real concern about the survivability of our race and kind.

The Debate

It was past four when Cleo Manago and Llaila Afrika entered the theater from rear exits, both to the accompaniment of fight music, both dressed in African garb and each accompanied by a small entourage. I was excited that I should finally learn whether or not the Hamites had introduced homosexuality to Africa, or at least to Africans in the Diaspora.

I will not say that the debate itself was anticlimactic after the rough-and-tumble of the panel discussion. Each man---Manago and Afrika---showed scholarship and sincerity. Manago's presentation was a historical recitation of the evidence of homosexuality among certain African people and in certain cultures. He spoke of the gatekeepers of Burkino Fasso, of the Ghanian chief who refused to give up his same-gender loving ways when missionaries arrived; he spoke of one of the personages in history I most admire, Queen Nzinga of Angola. He also defined what is meant by "same gender loving" as opposed to whatever appellations are otherwise currently used for the same phenomenon. He further took care to define the difference between white homosexuals and Black homosexuals, between homosexuality in an African context and in a European context. Through carefully juxtaposing incidents in European history that show how Europe has responded to homosexuals in their midst, he made an argument for a long-standing tradition of anti-homosexualism among Europeans. He said it was because of the Europeans' intense fear of genetic annihilation; I believe it has to do with the rampant venereal disease in Europe throughout most of the first and second millennia. Either way, a case can be made that not only is there a long and well-documented tradition of homophobia in the Western world, but apparently homophobia is something that Blacks are taking from Western culture that is inconsistent with our own tradition, a tradition that has produced in this century the likes of Bessie Smith, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Billie Holiday, and Angela Y. Davis.

As to what I heard from brother Afrika: I find it difficult to synthesize Laila Afrika's observations into something I could use. Clearly his argument about homosexuality is rooted in fear and irrationalism. Dr. Afrika is a hygienist, and many of the things he says make sense generally speaking. I certainly would never dispute the concept he put forward about sexual addiction, but it has to be seen as a general observation, not as something specific to homosexuals alone. Dr. Afrika's emphasis emphasized his own phobias and the fact that not even good nutrition is a cure-all for fear. A phobia indicates lingering, unjustifiable, unreasonable fear. We fear something or someone because of what it is or what it does. Implicit in much of what homophobia is about is the very nature of homosexual sex practices. The fears that surround homosexuality are innumerable. Male penetration has long been a focus of taboo because it is seen to make a man the equivalent of a woman, and since the status of women has been so low the act becomes tantamount to an abdication of man hood



and male status. For a Black male in America, whose manhood and status are always tenuous at best, homosexuality is like a pair of cement shoes on a man tossed in the ocean. But there is not an orifice of the human body that human beings have not put to use for pleasure or what passes as pleasure. To those like Dr. Afrika who would have us all be kosher, so to speak, and whose principal reference to homosexuality is scatological, it can only be said that in one aspect or another, every human orifice, at one time or another, contains some form of excrement, whether blood, feces, placebo, urine, or whatever: but we are human beings and we do not wallow in our excrement, we do not sanctify it. No, we take what is unclean and make it clean and useful. Black folks have always taken the worst and made the best, and while hygiene may be indicative of mental and spiritual health, it is not the sum total of either. Health, to paraphrase Charles Hamilton, is one of my issues. I would love to have a tete-a-tete with Dr. Afrika and exchange observations and statistical references. There are things we need to understand about health, but they are many, and some are unsettling. One may appreciate that the circumcision of their men has given Jewish women a low incidence of cervical cancer, but would one dare presume why Arab men have the lowest rate of prostate cancer?

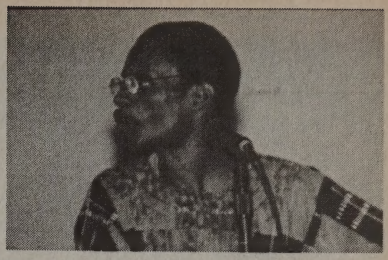
What Shall I Write?

I left the Vision with more questions raised than answered. I had the distinct feeling that I was witnessing the slow hatching of a serpent's egg. Whereas I had thought as little about Black homophobia as had England's Victoria about lesbians, suddenly I was not amused. I kept thinking about the panel discussion and the debate, and the cautionary words of Reverend Victoria.

As I grew up, in our tradition, I did not look at homosexuality as something one should fear whether one was in it, or completely outside of it. It was just a given, and how we dealt with it in speech and custom underscored how Black people were different from whites. I was slow at reading erotica because in America I only knew ultimately the culture, words and language and deeds of Black people, and it took me a while to understand that even the slang we use, and the euphemisms we prefer for all sexual matters, are different from those white people use. It may not mean much, but there is a difference between having a dick and calling it a dick than having something one calls a prick or a cock. We meant something else by a cock. We meant something else about a lot of things. And we had people who kids called uncle who might also be whispered to be funny, but who were never "gay" and who certainly weren't fruits or pansies. They were a part of our lives and did not live segregated from the rest of us.

I am an African American and not a puritan. Dress up a puritan in kinte cloth and he or she is still a puritan. I do not believe in witches or warlocks and I have no need to burn anyone. I was not around when the first humans were created. I wasn't around when the first humans of the same sex discovered that they could do a little something-something together. As Dwayne Mooney put it though, homosexuality is real. And so is homophobia, a disease of cowards that becomes more virulent as our own virility as a people is tested. What is immoral for us, the Blacks, is that we refuse to use whatever resources can be marshalled for our survival and prosperity as a people. Our debate should not be about the phenomenon of Black homosexuality, but rather (to again paraphrase Charles Hamilton) how best to put the singular talents and abilities of Black homosexuals to use in our community. I remember the year---1971---sitting on a bus reading a letter to the editor in Jet magazine. A brother was warning militants not to discount Black homosexuals in the movement, in the revolution. Somebody should have taken his warning. One of my friends of the period had been a mighty political organizer who, by the time I met him, had been thoroughly neutralized in his work for our community by our community. We had done as much to discredit him as they, and only because he was gay. And every time I realized what he had become, I also thought what we would not have become but for what he helped make possible: Bayard Rustin made a dream.

Whatever homosexuality is and wherever it comes from, I trust God to understand it better than men and to have more compassion for its practitioners than anything written down by men ostensibly dictated by God can ever inform or imply. Charlatans use the word of God to destroy the sanctity of God's creation. Nature, God's preserve, has its mysteries; humans are not the only species in which homosexuality occurs. Male geese, for instance, sometimes mate for life, and why it occurs as it does can only be answered by God.



I left out of the theater feeling I had not learned anything new, feeling that we, the audience, had paid a lot to learn so little. But isn't it always that way? Hasn't that been our history? But I could not dawdle. I was on my way to help cope with a "real problem" that has to do with six orphans living in a shack right here in Los Angeles because a lot of people, Black and white, don't give a damn if hardworking Black folks get ripped off trying to do the right thing. And then I was on to a Unitarian Church meeting to find the Oneness of God and renew my faith in the oneness of men.

I believe that God is an ocean, and like the energy we give each other that is called sexual---that may be physical or spiritual---the ocean takes in all that is channeled to it and gives back mysteries that can never be fully fathomed.

As I walked to Leimert Plaza I heard a rap sample of "Love Hangover" blasting from a kid's car: "If there's a cure for this I don't want it, don't want it." I shook my head and said a Lord Have Mercy. I knew that if I were to pass by the plaza in several hours time, there would be an army of men mobilized, seeking each other out. If we could enlist the hearts and minds of those men in an effort that did not consign them to a stereotype or condemn them to death and damnation, we ourselves would be free.

The full debate is available on video and audio cassette through the National Body of the Black Men's Xchange. The audio cassette is $25 plus $5 shpping and handling, and the audio cassette is $15 plus $5 shipping and handling. To purchase your copy, call BMX @ 310.419.1961. Look for BMX on the internet at http://home.earthlink.;net/~blkembrace/bmx.htm. Look for the National Body of The Black Men's Exhange website at http://home.earthlink.net/~blkembrace/nbbmx.htm Email them at:BlkMensXX@aol.com

Soap opera fans remember her as Valerie Grant on the number one rated daytime serial of the 70's "Days Of Our Lives". As the show's first teenage black beauty, Tina Andrews was receiving a thousand-plus fan letters a week. Encouraged by her black and white fans' adoration of her talent and classic "good girl" good looks, as well as a boost in the ratings, the show's writers and producers decided to give her a love interest. A white man. But not just your any old trailer park variety, or one of the then fashionable Euro-trash types. In their all knowing wisdom the producers decided the designated white boy would be the son of the show's pillars of propriety, Bill Hayes and Susan Seaforth Hayes. He was blond and blue-eyed, with an aquiline nose and the masculinity of Liberace.

There was a long television courtship. The young couple talked of love, hope and promise, but never touched. There were smoldering looks and whispered longings with music lingering in the air. Still, Tina's character remained chaste, virginal and purer than the mother of God.

And then it happened.

The white boy kissed her. The ratings crashed faster than the stock market of '29. Her once adoring fans now wrote with poison pens. The black audience cried: Girl, how could you? The white viewers shouted: Bitch, how dare you! Smelling fresh blood, the press and paparazzi circled like vultures. From People Magazine and the L.A. Times, to fan rags and the tabloids-of-the-day, Tina Andrews was dragged through the mud.

SCREENWRITER TINA ANDREWS: FROM THERE TO HERE

by Erik Aston

It was 1979.

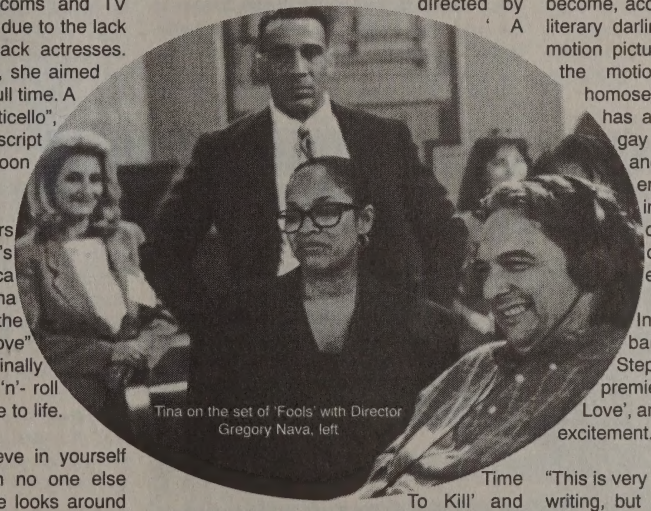
Television audiences were not ready for black-on-white love in their living rooms back then. With blackfolk feeling betrayed and angry, and whitefolk embittered and vindictive, the thin-skinned producers, punked out by the turning tide, fired Miss Andrews promptly, and as promptly, give the young white actor a lily white girlfriend and, reportedly, a raise.

Nonetheless, Tina continued her acting career, guest-starring in sitcoms and TV movies until the well ran dry due to the lack of decent black roles for black actresses. Having always been a writer, she aimed her focus on pen and paper full time. A play, "The Mistress of Monticello", was the result. And a movie script on the life of Frankie Lymon soon followed.

Fast forward almost 20 years later. Seated in four director's chairs are Hallie Berry, Vivica A. Fox, Lela Rochon and Tina Andrews: The three stars of the film "Why Do Fools Fall In Love" and the film's writer who is finally seeing her tale of 50's rock- 'n'- roll teen idol Frankie Lymon come to life.

"It's important that you believe in yourself and your talent, even when no one else does," Andrews notes as she looks around the set of the $30 million film that was created in her head almost 20 years ago. Having already contributed to the scripts of "Sister Act II" and "Soul Food" and currently mulling over a multimillion dollar writing-producing-directing deal with Warner Bros., Andrews does not take her new-found good fortune lightly. "Things were hard at times," she stated in a recent interview out by the pool of her hill top ocean-view home in Malibu, " but you have to just hang in there. I remember when the acting was really slowing down and I was down to my last $15. I look around at all the great things that are happening for me today and I am grateful, not only because success has decided to shine on me once again, but all of my hard work is paying off."

As she prepares to write and co-produce Angela Bassett's next film, has already turned in her first draft of "Dreamgirls" (her film adaptation of the Broadway hit to be directed by ' A Time To Kill' and 'Batman & Robin' director Joel Schumacher for which she was reportedly paid over $1 million) and is set to write, co-produce with Natalie Cole, and make her directorial debut with a film adaptation of Benide Little's national bestseller 'Good Hair", the former Broadway dancer from Chicago-turned-actress-turned-writer looks back on her 'soap' days as a valuable learning experience. In the stories that she tells and will tell on the big screen, black women are given unprecedented spotlights and black actresses are given unprecedented opportunities to showcase their talents. "I know how hard it is to be a black actress in this business. Now that I'm on the other side, I see the chance to create opportunities for my sisters. I might even throw a role in here and there for myself."



Tina on the set of 'Fools' with Director Gregory Nava, left

Known in her early disco days as the industry's number one 'fag hag', Andrews has become, according to industry insiders, the literary darling of many of the openly gay motion picture executives that virtually run the motion picture industry. Though not homosexual herself, Ms. Andrews is and has always been a big supporter of gay causes and devotes much time and effort to AIDS related fundraisers. "I'm just like everybody else in the world today. I've lost a lot of friends to AIDS, and it's my obligation, my duty, to do whatever I can to help stop it."

In a few days, Tina and her husband of more than 10 years, Stephan, will jet to New York for the premiere of 'Why Do Fools Fall In Love', and it is hard for her to contain her excitement.

"This is very special for me. I've done a lot of writing, but much of it has been re-writing other people's projects, or coming in to add scenes, to shift tones, but with 'Fools', I will see, for the first time on the big screen 'written by Tina Andrews'. And, Chile, I gotta tell you, it's been a long, hard, fabulous road for the doll from there to here and I'm not taking any exits!"

"I'm just like everybody else in the world today. I've lost a lot of friends to AIDS, and it's my obligation, my duty, to do whatever I can to help stop it."

FROM THE ARCHIVES: ATTENDEES AT THE 1996 BROTHER2BROTHER RETREAT IN MALIBU

photo by William H. Jones Jr.

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ETTA JAMES: FRESH VINTAGE

BY ERIK ASTON

There are a lot of queens in the world and some would argue far too many. There are queens that we love and minor queens that we rightfully take for granted. And then there is Etta James: Queen of the Blues. A capricious singer whose moods are the stuff myths are made of, Etta can be sultry, searing, sexual and short-tempered with a lyric as well as with her no good man. In her new Windham Hill CD 'Etta James, Life, Love & the Blues', this musical patrician is lavishing grand passion on every note.

In this self-produced CD, Grammy winner Etta returns to the masters of low down love and pain Marvin Gaye, Willie Dixon, Al Green, Brook Benton and Sly Stone. She's singing your pain and your pent-up anguish because she has lived it. Her own frustration with the ups and downs in life and love are fused into poetry that your poor heart understands and yet your head knows better.

Etta empathizes with the crocodile tears you shed cause your man has gone off with somebody younger and better looking because Etta's own life was nearly overwhelmed by spirit-crushing turmoil, unflinchingly chronicled in her acclaimed autobiography 'Rage To Survive'. Dogged every step of the way by verbally and physically abusive men, devastating financial problems and years of heroin addiction, Jamesetta Hawkins was born to sing the raw blues. She first raised her strong pipes in 1938 L.A. Like most great African American singers---Bessie, Dinah, Aretha---Etta came from the church choir.

For African Americans in the 1950's one road out of poverty was show business. On almost every street corner of America was a teenage vocal group crooning the latest R&B or rock 'n' roll and praying to be discovered by some big record company. At the ripe old age of 14, Etta, realizing that music would always be a part of her life, formed and fronted 'The Creolettes'. The promising girl group performed at high school record hops and local dances.

As an 'answer song" to singer Hank Ballard's risque hit "Work With Me Annie Mae", Etta wrote the now classic "Roll With Me Henry"

and, in 1953, recorded it with Johnny Otis, scoring her first hit. Between 1955 and 1975 Miss Etta created a dozen top-ten R&B standards and more than 25 chart hits which include the definitive soul standards "All I Could Do Was Cry (1960), "At Last" (1961), ""Trust In Me" (1961), "Stop The Wedding" (1962), "Tell Mama" (1967), "I Rather Go Blind" and "Security" (1968). Etta ranks third---right behind Aretha and Dionne Warwick---as the most prolific female R&B hit maker of that era.

In recent years Queen Etta has been nominated for 6 Grammy Awards and saw her soul classics become repertoire center pieces for Janis Joplin, Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones, Tina Turner, Gladys Knight, Natalie Cole, Rita Coolidge and Rod Stewart. But no matter who covered her songs, we always thought of Etta and invariably made the comparison.

Now after a lifetime of love, anger, pain and a sense of humor that has often saved her,

Etta has poured her immense talent into an album that can be rightfully classified as her definitive blues signature. On the song "I'll Take Care of You", Etta dips down into her lower register and slows the tempo to a dirge to underscore the lyric's smoldering sexuality. Like an actor she changes characters with each song.

She becomes sass personified with "Hootchie Cootchie Gal", then a testifying diva on "The Love You Save May Be Your Own". This is the kind of album everybody can identify with because we have all been hurt at one time or another. There are moments when Etta's searing vocals hit an exposed nerve, sending you swaying and swearing.

Etta fills her performances with burning emotion punctuated by relentlessness and versatility that will move you to tears and cheers.

Beware all you other queens out there cause Etta's on stage and the stage is all hers!

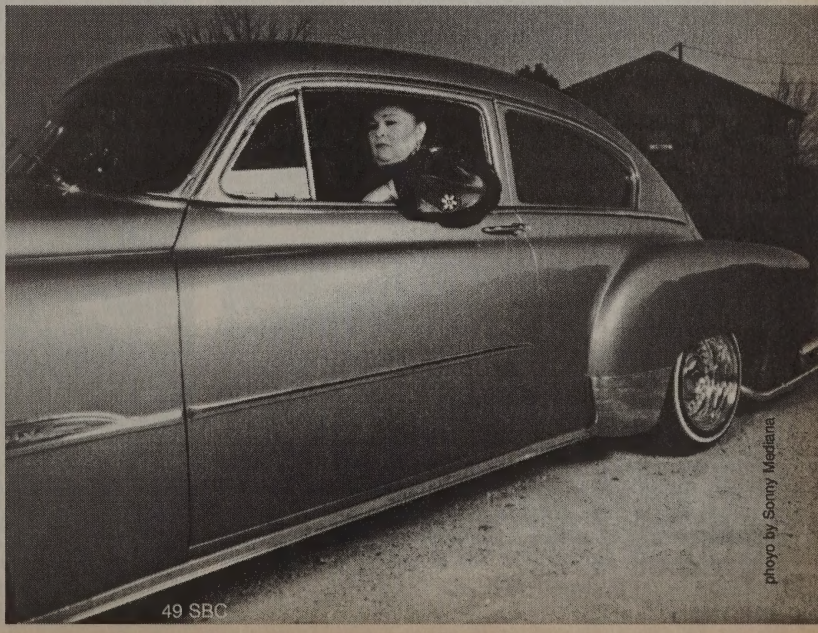


photo by Sonny Mediana

MUSIC REVIEWS

BY JABALI HICKS

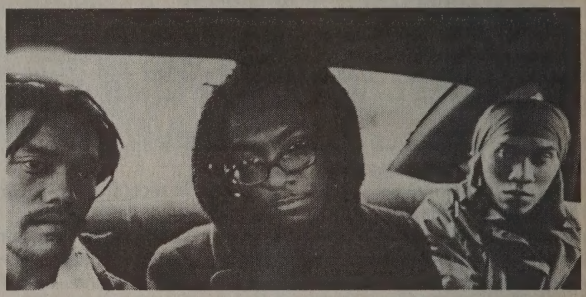
N'DEA DAVENPORT
n' dea davenport

(V2/Delicious Vinyl)

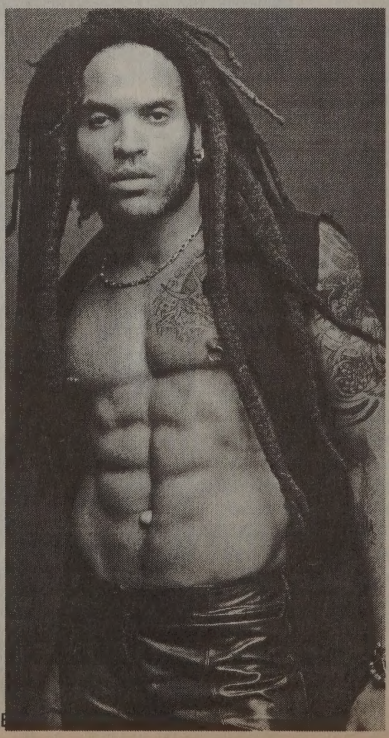
Ok, every now and then a record comes out and you know it's gonna be the soundtrack for that season of your life. I give you N'Dea Davenport for just such an occasion. This girl don't need no jewelry, she don't need no hair, this girl can sing y'all!!! Both writing and producing this self-titled endeavor, she creeps up on you like a Siamese cat, purring her intentions all over your shoulders. I love it!!! N'Dea states, "This is a project for everybody, from homeboys to rednecks and you can plainly hear that sense of community that happens when folks who love music come together." Amen! It's screamingly obvious that N'Dea recorded this away from the confines of the tried and true Los Angeles recording studios. Instead, she crafted these gems in a converted old theatre, adorned with lush fabrics and tapestries. Funny, how as you listen to the opening track "Whatever You Want," it moves you, and you feel all good inside. But then isn't that the point of 'soul music' anyway? Well, that's what my grandma used to tell me..... Meanwhile, "Underneath A Red Moon" takes you on a musical journey to the south, her vocals caressing the breeze effortlessly as guitar licks kiss the sky. All that said, N'dea continues to throb like a freshly opened wound with the Nancy Wilson classic, "Save Your Love For Me." If you have a lover and you wanna keep it on fire....this is the cut for you.....so sexy! "No Never Again" aint your momma's disco. Its full of polaroid sexuality. "In Wonder" is a song that prompts the listener to produce their own stream of consciousness. Her mode of communication seems to come from some underwater sonar, with the pulsations of the beat echoing off the listener. Meanwhile, "Bullshittin'" makes me wanna holler and throw up both my hands.....So for all you kids who are rolling around to the sounds of the moment, take a chance and listen to the woman of the future.

BLACK EYED PEAS
Behind The Front
(Interscope Records)

This Los Angeles based trio's vibe is reminiscent of Portishead, Digable Planets, DeLaSoul and Stereolab. This means the peas are



the real shit.....Beginning as a dance group called Tribal Nation, they re-invented themselves as a non-Versace-Tommy Hilfiger wearing alternative rappers. You first heard of them on the Bulworth soundtrack with the jazzy bounce track, "Joints & Jams." With their debut effort in stores now, the peas are cooked to perfection a ready to be served. Get with them on the Smokin' Grooves tour along with Public Enemy, Busta Rhymes, Cypress Hill, Canibus, Gang Starr and Wycleff and the Refugee All Stars.



LENNY KRAVITZ
5
(Virgin Records)

This record follows with the freshness of Lenny's new cropped do. Reinvention never seemed so right. A chameleon since his 1989 debut, Let Love Rule, Lenny has never been one to feel comfortable with limitations. 5 is a mix of what you may remember of Lenny with a sentimental twist.....This shit is funky.!! Throwing a new twist on the game, Lenny uses female background singers that deliver the edge that was somehow missing on discs gone by (read circus). With the death of his mother, Roxie Roker (Helen on "The Jeffersons"), "Thinking of You" is one of Lenny's most personal and beautiful efforts. "Black Velveteen" is a sexy scorcher that was inspired by current news events. Says Lenny of the explosive track "Super Soul Fighter", 'He's like a comic-book character, going around spreading good vibrations.' Sounds more like Lenny. Keep your ears open for the Lenny Produced Cree Summer project coming soon.

BRANDY
Never Say Never
(Atlantic Records)

Brandy's greatest legacy won't be her contribution to music. Instead it will be her ability to re-invent R&B with her Gidget-meets-"That Black Girl" energy. She brought back the whole virginal innocence that had long been vacated by the likes of pre-Control Janet. As a vocalist, Brandy delivers the goods with the understanding that she's riding the tracks instead of merging with them. Opening with a buoyant bouquet of lovesexy, "Angel In Disguise" is one of the very best tracks this project has to offer. Regarding the first single, "The Boy Is Mine", a duet with Monica, well, the boy is definitely Monica's. Another standout track is "Almost Doesn't Count", with rich lines such as 'Can't get to heaven/One foot off the ground/everybody knows/almost doesn't count.' In the vein of most R&B divas this season there is the required Diane Warren-penned track produced by David Foster. "Have You Ever" is such a forced radio friendly Celine Dion concoction, makes me want to hold my candle in the wind and sachet from side to side.

TRIN-I-TEE
5:7
(B Rite Music)

If you like contemporary gospel delivered by a young, talented, cutting edge group whose vocals are peppered with traces of Toni Braxton, Monica and good ole fashioned church revival wailing, then look no further. Trin-I -Tee is the group for you. This record is a perfect marriage of gospel, rhythm and blues and hip-hop. The first single, "God's Grace", is a gospel ballad produced by R. Kelly. Do yourself a favor and check out the remake of the Staple Singers classic "Respect Yourself". The average joe can listen to slow steady beats under repetitive riffs for only so long. Put the benjamins in the bank and listen.

AMASSI'S WOMEN IN JAZZ

The Amassi Center's 2nd annual women in jazz benefit is a rare treat. It's great to see a variety of wonderful performers who truly love music and the interpretation of such. Sandra Booker gave the performance of her life, scatting like Ella on acid. Meanwhile, Sweet Baby Jai had so much energy to give as she played her washboard, it made a reserved dude like me wanna get up to get down. Brenda Lee Eager's delivery was the epitome of jazz! Of course, Ms. Brenda Russell wore me out with the delivery of her classic "If Only For One Night." Sheila E. Broke the house down with only a couple of simple phrases. Keep a look out for Sheila's new album "Rites of Passage" due out at the end of the summer. For the good of the community and the good of yourself, support Cleo Manago, the Amassi Center, this kind of activism don't cost you nothin!!!

SOULFUL DIVAS: Volume 1-5 Various Artists (MCA Records)

reviewed by Jabali Hicks

Much like city streets, musical genres need names to make things navigational. The Soulful Divas collection defines those streets paved diamond high and sequin deep by the likes of Diana Ross, Aretha Franklin, Nancy Wilson, Nina Simone, Dionne Warwick and Thelma Houston. This series is compiled into five exquisite volumes, each with it's own biography written by noted diva guru David Nathan.

Volume One: Pop 'N' Soul Sirens is careful not to include the obvious hits that have been used and re-used in countless reissue packages. This set is a mixture of true classics, opening with Dionne Warwick's "I Say A Little Prayer", alongside first-time-on-CD songs from Florence Ballard, Maxine Brown, Doris Troy,I Martha Reeves, Freda Payne and Eloise Laws. To keep things balanced, there are tried and true cuts charted by Pop 'N' Soul Veterans Dusty Springfield "Who Gets Your Love" and Gladys Knight's "I'm Coming Home Again", along with gems by Madeline Bell, Patti Drew and Timi Yuro and Betty Everett.

Volume Two: Dance Queens focuses on the advent of disco in the early '70's. This was an art form essentially created in the black gay dance clubs of New York, and was absorbed by the mainstream culture (as all black creations are) as a dominant music form in the

mid-to-late 1970's. Artists like Jackie Moore, Linda Clifford, Thelma Houston and Stephanie Mills were given their first tastes of international fame through this medium. Careers in disco were created by the likes of Norma Jean Wright, Donna Summer and Vickie Sue Robinson. This compilation features all of these dance divas and more. Work!!!

Volume Three: This volume focuses on the core of the diva...ballads. The art of the balladeer requires superb skills as a lyrical interpreter. There are fourteen soulful divas represented in this volume, each knowing beyond a shadow of a doubt how to turn a phrase here, add a nuance there, to bring life to the songs they sing.The late Phyliss Hyman gives one of her most heartfelt performances on "Old Friend", while Merry Clayton delivers her knockout classic "When The World Turns Blue" and Jody Watley, best known as a dance artists, boasts untapped vocal skills on "It All Begins With You"

Volume Four: Bold Soul Sisters is all about no nonsense, you smell the muss under their arms get down with-the-get-down divas. The women represented here have all earned the title. Most of these divas are southern fried women and you can read that with every inflection of every song. From Tina Turner's "I've Been Loving You Too Long" to Millie Jackson's "If You're Not Back In Love By Monday" you sense the 'real' in their vocals.

Volume Five: Ladies of Jazz 'N' Soul. Before you heard about "soul music" you heard about jazz, and the likes of divas Sarah Vaughn, Ella Fitzgerald, Carmen McRae and Billie Holliday had made their mark, but in the 1960's a new breed of black vocal stylists emerged. Women like Nina Simone ("Do What You Gotta Do") , Dinah Washington ("What A Difference a Day Makes"), Marlena Shaw ("Go Away Little Boy"), Esther Phillips ("There You Go Again/Stormy Weather") and Nancy Wilson ("How Glad I Am") fused jazz with soul and came up with a volatile mix. Showcased here are these fabulous divas along side some newer ladies such as Rachelle Ferrell and Dianne Reeves.

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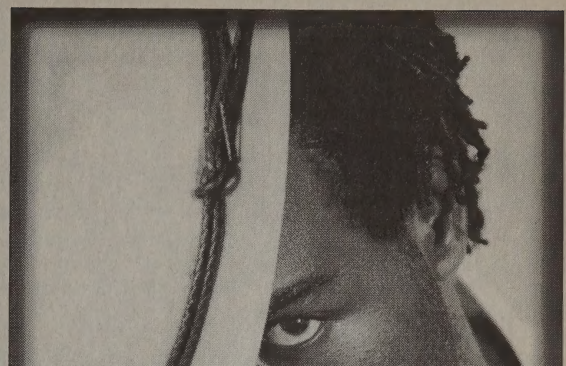

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Back in the day when the children of the seventies started locking away their bellbottoms and dancing away their disco nights, and when the children of the eighties were bracing for hip-hop, MTV and HIV, I remember watching a TV show called Good Times. It was about how times weren't always so good in the hood. It dealt with issues like welfare, and child abuse in black homes. We grew up with the ghetto-fabulous Thelma, a mammy named J.J. and a young queen of quality and consciousness named Michael, cried with Florida when James died...or determined he wanted more money.

The Evans were our family.

Back then I was the only little boy that I knew to be a die-hard Diana Ross fan. I would write her letters, buy her albums and make Crayola sketches of her all day long in school. I always loved to draw and paint, and I don't think it was so strange that Diana was my favorite subject.

Now I'm 21 years old. I still love to paint. And I still love movie and music divas. I love the faces...The faces. A career in make-up, for me, was as natural as my life in the life. For me it means being a part of the glamour squad that's responsible for some of the beautiful images that may inspire someone else. And the money ain't bad either.

Back to Good times. Remember that little girl whose birth mother beat her and burned her with an iron, whose life was a fantasy of denial, and whose eventual happily-ever-after was the embrace of a new mom named Wilona? A Penny for your thoughts. A Jackson in the making.

With more than 600 million album sales and more gold singles than any other female artist in the history of the world, a movie under her belt and music legendry in her future, the Diva Janet has the face of a make-up artists' dream.

I always thought it would be so dope if I could do that face one day. She's always giving you something different and unique; off the hook. Famed make-up artist, Kevin Aucoin, is fond of saying, "you could do a whole painting on one of her eyes'. That made my make-up brushes wet.

When I first started doing make-up I made a hit list of music and movie glamour-Divas whose personal and professional demands were equal to the standards I aspired to. An angel once told me that if you put your dreams out into the atmosphere with serious determination and truth then they will come back to you fulfilled. This list was my way of putting it out there.

Somewhere at the top of the list was the name Janet. (I'm still working up to Miss Ross.)

Two years ago I found myself in the enviable position of being assistant to celebrity make-up veteran Rudy Calvo. I wasn't quite sure if Rudy took to me because of my work or because he was fascinated in finding such a young fan of Diana Ross. Nonetheless, I got the job and I was taken under his wings. He was then approached to do Janet's upcoming European tour, but was unavailable. Being the mentoring villager that he was and has always been, Rudy referred them to me. On that recommendation this new kid on the block from Sacramento was at the Culver City Studios in the private trailer of Janet Jackson, doing a make-up test---an audition---on one of her dancers, while the international star hovered closely. I had to psyche myself out, becoming the "concentrated pro" drawn into what I was doing while I painted, pretending that Janet wasn't there. Otherwise I would have died. Or worse, fucked up the make-up!

When I finished she walked over to the girl that I had just painted and made small talk with me as I cleared my work station in her trailer. She told me that she liked the eyes. She said that they were "smooth". But all I could think was that she was just being polite---noncommital---and I had just did blown it.

Here I was, a nobody-with-somebody aspirations, in competition with the industry's finest.

I never thought in a million years that they would call. No. That's a lie. I still had my dreams! So much to my surprise and expectation the phone rang the next day. It was Janet's road manager, Jaime Mendoza. After I convinced myself that this was not somebody joking with me, that it was the real thing, I was able to hear him tell me that Janet Jackson, yes, THE VERY JANET JACKSON, loved my work and would like for me to do her make-up for her upcoming European tour.

You could've knocked me over with a feather! My mind was racing with questions about the places I would be going to. Up until this point my traveling resume' only listed Sacramento and South Central Los Angeles. In just six days I would be in Brussels, Belgium.

Once there, I had just enough time to check into my room and get some sleep. The next morning I would be doing The Face for the first time.

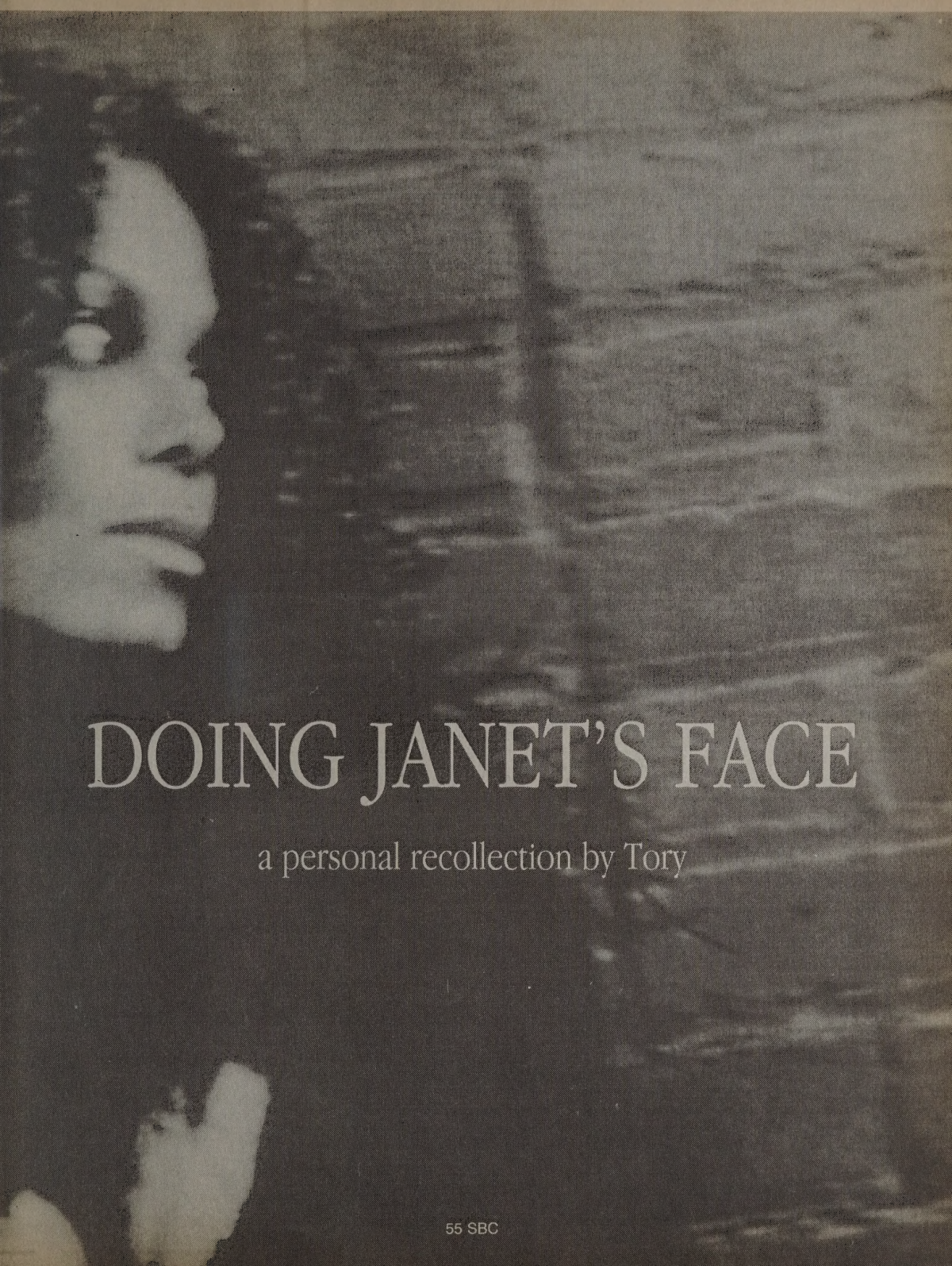
I woke up at 9 and took a shower. Breakfast consisted of toast, orange juice and a subconscious pep talk: "Alright now, Tory, you're here because you're good, you're here because you know what you're doing, you're here because Janet needs you, she really, really needs you!" Well, that's what I kept telling myself.

I was then escorted into Janet's hotel room by two bodyguards who reminded me of Kevin Costner and the big guy covering Whitney. They set up a workstation for me, then made an inconspicuous exit. I didn't know what to do with myself because I knew that any second Janet Jackson would emerge from door #1. And except for every other video on TV and in every magazine on the racks, I hadn't seen her since the test. I had to make myself not think about that or my hands would start shaking.

And then, within minutes, there she was. She entered the room, clearly exhausted from more than a week of grueling rehearsals, but gracious and warm with a casualness and a greeting that put me at ease, thanks to that warm familiar smile that was uniquely hers. She shared her breakfast with me, and suddenly became real. She reminded me of Penny once again.

A natural joker whose a lot more looser in the real than she sometimes comes across in the celestium of stardom, I was often the butt of her harmless humor. I remember most vividly, during a rehearsal period, when I was lap-danced by The Diva. She vamped and cooed and purred and teased with a sweet and silly furor and a pouting straight-face that sent the crew into hysterics. It goes without saying that it did nothing to change the nature of my sexual ways, but if you're going to experience mock intimacy, a Janet tease is the only way to go.

Throughout Brussels, Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Paris, I found myself 'hanging' out in night clubs, restaurants and backstage with a beautiful spirit that made me feel like family. That beautiful face, like that beautiful heart, was always fun to be around. It was no surprise that her European fans, like her fans here, are so devoted, and she genuinely returns the affection with a graciousness not all superstars posses.



DOING JANET'S FACE

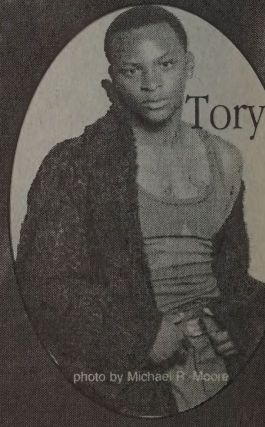
a personal recollection by Tory

Janet has a song on her album The Velvet Rope called Special. In the song it says "everybody needs to feel special". I know from experience that most of the drama in our lives evolve from this need. It reminds me of when I was a little boy. I always knew that I was different. But I was taught to believe that it wasn't okay to be different. So I became introverted, and very self conscious of myself. I hated being different and I began to hate myself. The song also says "you have to learn to water your spiritual garden". And it is through this spiritual growth that I have learned to love myself.

Before I left for the tour my friends gave me a surprise bon voyage party. Everyone there was special to me for different reasons. But the one thing they all have in common is the ability to make me feel special. Not different but special. Because I am free to be myself around them, and still feel loved.

That's what this experience was for me. It was a long and exciting journey from where I've come from, to where I've gone, to where I'm going. And I have made a new friend along the way. Janet Damita Jo (Penny) Jackson.

Now if I could just get that Ross hook-up!



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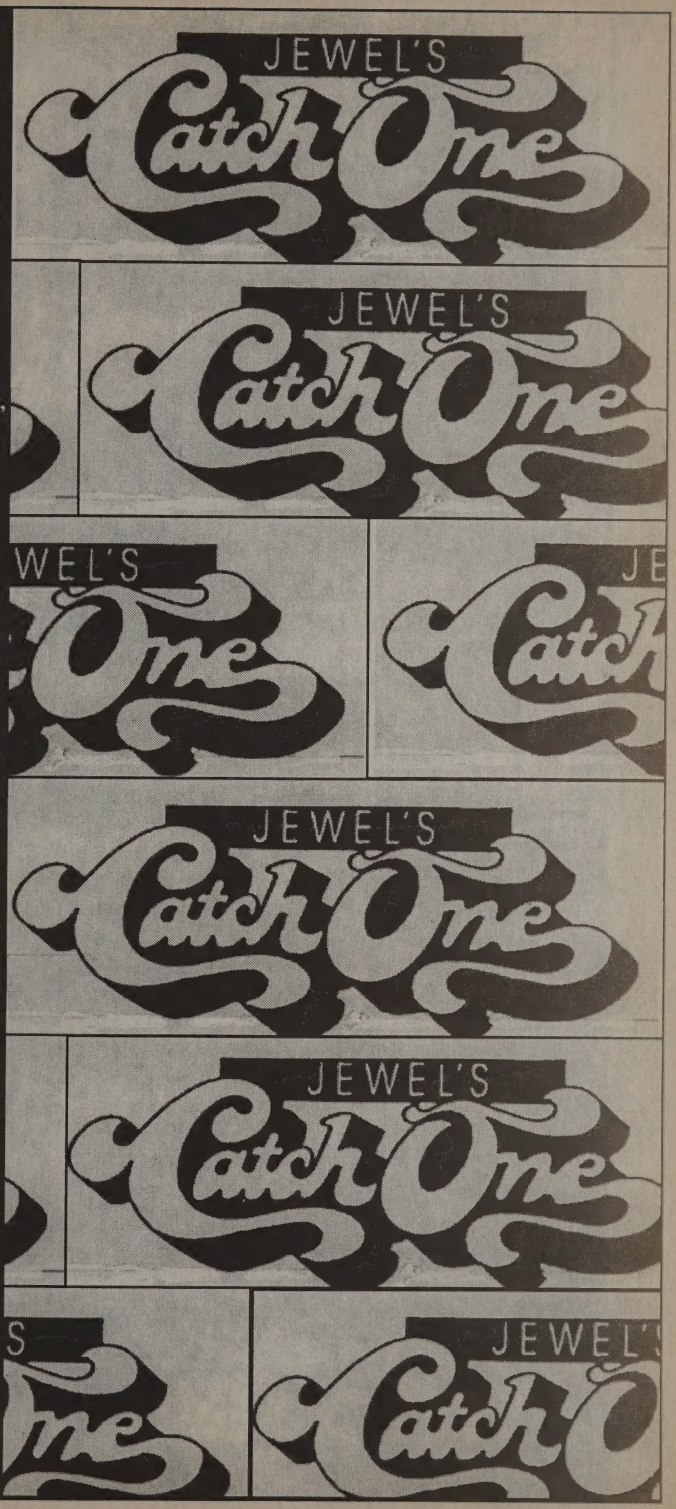

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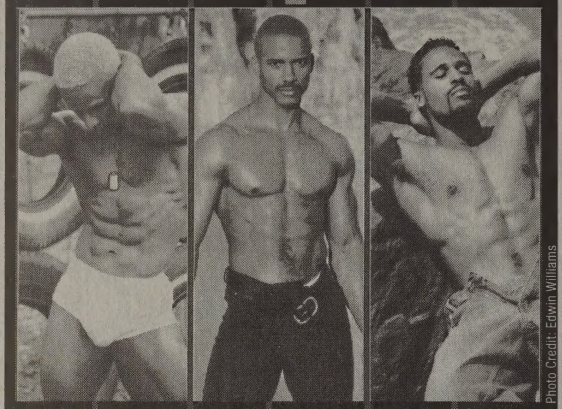

Photo Credit: Edwin Williams

Men Calendar for $10.95

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website: www.chapion-men.com

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Mind & Body

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Men Calendar

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Send check or money order only to your closest location:

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6230 Wilshire Blvd.,
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Atlanta, GA 30308

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City

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Zip

(quantity) x **$10.95** = _____

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(see below for pricing)

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4-6 calendars: $4.00
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Total due= _____

THE SBC COLLECTION

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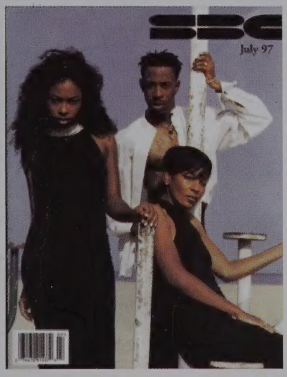

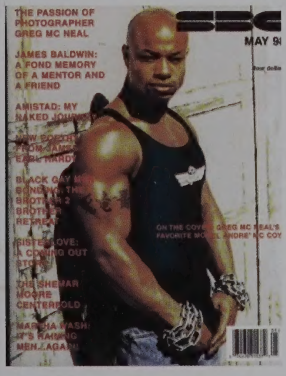
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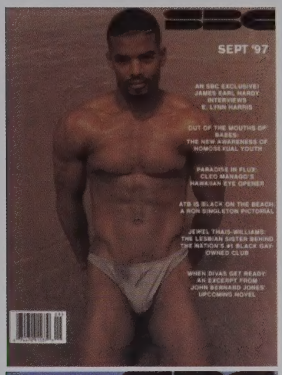
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JEWEL THAIS-WILLIAMS: THE LESBIAN SISTER BEHIND THE NATION'S #1 BLACK GAY OWNED CLUB
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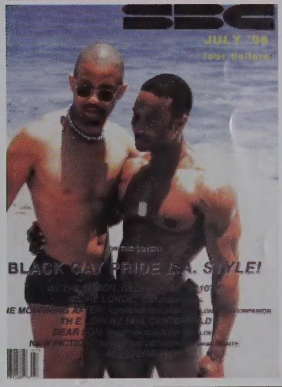

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I am enclosing $_____ (total # of magazines x $5)

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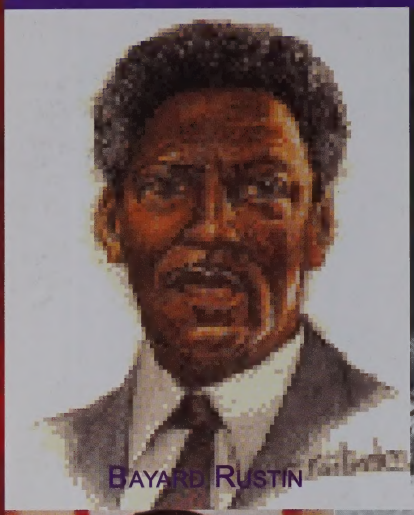
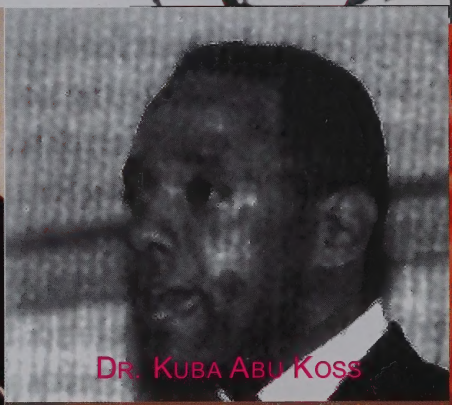
THE GATEKEEPERS

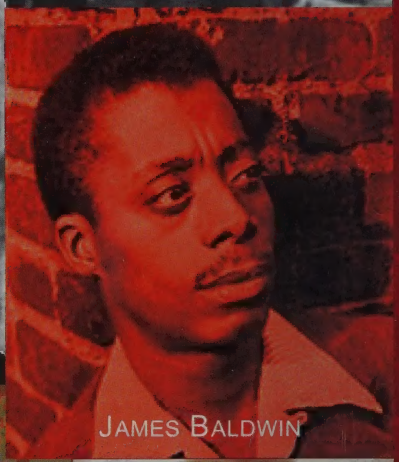

BAYARD RUSTIN

KABAKA MWANGA

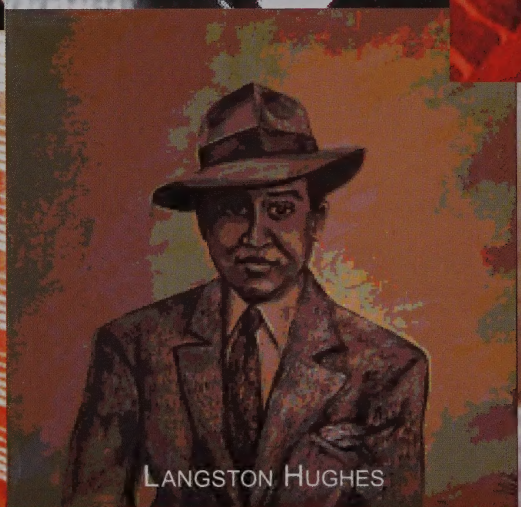
HARRIET TUBMAN

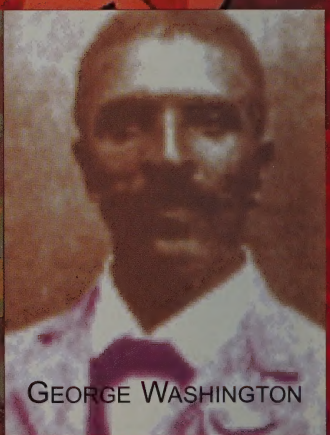
REV. JAMES CLEVELAND


DR. KUBA ABU KOSS


JAMES BALDWIN

Zora Neal Hurston


LANGSTON HUGHES


GEORGE WASHINGTON

Pictured above are some of the "GateKeepers" of the African Diaspora, same-gender-loving (SGL) Sisters and Brothers who contributed to improving the quality of life for all people. With "pride" we present them to you. Find more information on the GateKeepers at http://www.amassi.com/gatekeepers.htm

Malidoma Somé, a member of the Dagara community of Burkina Faso in Africa says, "The whole notion of "gay and lesbian" does not exist in the indigenous world. The [same-gender-loving (SGL)] person is looked at primarily as a "gatekeeper" in the community. With capacities that go beyond male and female only. Why is it that everywhere else in the world, [same-gender-loving] people are a blessing and in the white dominated world they are a curse? It